

WHEN CULTURE IS A TREND: THE #ANGELERS FANDOM

Dr. Stefania Berutti, Lorenzo de' Medici Institute

Dr. Giovina Caldarola, La Capagrossa Coworking

Dr. Astrid D'Eredità, Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, Taranto

Antonia Falcone, Archeomatica

Mattia Mancini, University of Pisa

English Abstract

In this paper, we describe an Italian phenomenon that started offline, but has grown exponentially online through social media. We are talking about a journalist and scientific communicator, Alberto Angela. Can a public figure, who offers culture on a TV broadcast, be transformed on social media into a pop star, with legions of fans that go insane at every appearance?

Fan pages with tens of thousands of likes, endless lines of people at the presentations of his books, peak viewing time during his prime time TV show: These features made Alberto Angela a cultural celebrity, with fandoms that follow him on- and off-line.

Alberto Angela, born in 1962, is known in Italy as one of the most important cultural proponents, along with his father Piero, a journalist and writer. Alberto studied paleontology, then followed in the footsteps of his father, becoming a journalist and writer and producing documentaries around the world.

The most unique aspect of Alberto Angela resides in his particular communicative style, characterized by gestures that have a hypnotic effect on the audience. His language is modern, but never ordinary, and it allowed him to fascinate millions of viewers, especially those under 25, that are usually less interested in culture on TV.

He is a celebrity on par with many pop stars, and his presence on social media is overwhelming: Multiple unofficial fan pages are dedicated to him on *Facebook*, with hundreds of thousands of fans. *Twitter* has been critical in spreading the popularity of Alberto Angela. One of his most successful TV programs, *Ulysses, The Pleasure of Discovery*, broadcast on Saturday evenings, trends on Twitter with #Ulissee.

In March 2016, another hashtag appeared on Twitter, #Angelers, which was enthusiastically picked up by Angela's fans.

The next step was to organize and give life to the unofficial #Angelers fandom by opening the *Facebook* group "Angelers, Fans of Alberto Angela." This not only allows fans to meet online, but also makes them part of the creation and circulation of content related to Angela and the topics of his TV episodes. After the first few months, the group had a notable increase in followers, reaching over 18,000 fans in the first year.

At the moment, most of the subscribers are Italian, concentrated between the ages of 21-50, and the majority are female. Many of the fans have a cultural background.

Since its beginning, the group has been active in various cultural and charitable events. In the summer of 2016, after an earthquake in Italy, the community promoted three fundraisers for the Italian Red Cross through the sale of items with the #Angelers logo.

Today the fandom is still growing and very active in sharing articles, links, and videos related to many different cultural topics; four admins constantly monitor the activity of the group to avoid conflicts caused by keyboard warriors. The large amount of visual content led to the opening of a *Pinterest* and an *Instagram* account, as well as a Telegram channel - and a BOT account is on its way.

Italian Abstract

Scopo di questo paper è il racconto di un fenomeno tutto italiano, nato offline ma cresciuto esponenzialmente online grazie all'ausilio dei social media, che vede come protagonista il giornalista e divulgatore italiano Alberto Angela. Può dunque un personaggio pubblico che si occupa di cultura in televisione essere assimilabile sui social ad una pop star con schiere di fan in delirio ad ogni sua apparizione?

Fanpage con decine di migliaia di like, file interminabili durante le presentazioni dei suoi libri e picchi d'ascolto durante il prime time televisivo hanno fatto di Alberto Angela una star della cultura, con fandom attivi che lo seguono dal vivo e sul web.

Alberto Angela, classe 1962, in Italia è conosciuto come uno dei più importanti divulgatori culturali e scientifici, insieme al padre Piero, già giornalista e scrittore. Figlio d'arte, ha svolto studi paleontologici per poi seguire le orme del padre diventando anch'egli giornalista e scrittore e avviando una serie di produzioni documentaristiche in giro per il mondo.

La peculiarità di Alberto Angela risiede nelle sue straordinarie capacità comunicative, incrementate da una gestualità quasi ipnotica: utilizzando un linguaggio moderno e mai banale, ha affascinato milioni di telespettatori, arrivando a sedurre una grossa fetta di

pubblico under 25, poco avvezzo alla cultura in tv.

La sua notorietà è dilagante al pari di una pop star, tale da vantare una importante presenza sui social media, con diverse fan page Facebook unofficial a lui dedicate, seguite da centinaia di migliaia di fans.

Anche Twitter, piattaforma social che ben si presta ai commenti live di eventi e trasmissioni tv, ha un ruolo fondamentale nell'evoluzione della popolarità di Alberto Angela: uno dei suoi programmi di maggior successo intitolato "Ulisse, il piacere della scoperta" trasmesso il sabato sera, vede costantemente in trend topic l'hashtag di riferimento #Ulisse.

Per questo, nel marzo 2016 si è tentato su Twitter l'esperimento di accostare all'hashtag ufficiale della trasmissione #Ulisse, l'hashtag #Angelers (che identificasse i fans dello studioso) notando immediate ed entusiastiche interazioni. La scelta del nome Angelers nasce dallo studio approfondito delle dinamiche dei fandom sui social media, alcuni esempi per tutti le Beliebers e le OneDirectioners, in grado di creare hashtag ad hoc di supporto ai propri beniamini.

Il passo successivo è stato dunque quello di dare vita al fandom #Angelers, radunandolo in un gruppo facebook intitolato "Angelers - Fan di Alberto Angela", che avesse non solo lo scopo di far incontrare virtualmente gli appassionati, ma quello di renderli partecipi e soprattutto protagonisti nella creazione e diffusione di contenuti legati sia alla figura dello studioso, sia alle tematiche da lui affrontate durante le sue trasmissioni. Dopo una lenta ma costante crescita nei primi mesi, durante i quali è stato creato il logo identificativo della community, il gruppo ha avuto una notevole impennata di iscrizioni, raggiungendo in un anno oltre 18 mila iscritti.

Attualmente la prevalenza degli iscritti è di nazionalità italiana, con picchi di età tra i

21-30 e 41-50, perlopiù donne. Il settore di formazione e in alcuni casi occupazionale è quello archeologico-culturale.

Fin dalla sua nascita il gruppo è stato attivo in diverse iniziative a sostegno di attività culturali, ma anche di azioni benefiche. Nell'estate 2016, in seguito ad un violento terremoto che ha colpito il centro Italia, la community si è fatta promotrice di tre raccolte fondi da destinare alla Croce Rossa Italiana, attraverso la vendita dei gadgets con il logo #Angelers.

Il fandom, vanta ad oggi una intensa attività di condivisione di contenuti (testo, link, video) riferiti ad una grande varietà di argomenti culturali, spesso oggetto di confronti e discussioni costruttive. Inoltre la smisurata creazione di contenuti visual ha reso necessaria l'apertura dei canali Pinterest e Instagram dedicati, in aggiunta ad un canale Telegram, al quale presto si affiancherà un BOT.

Il gruppo, in continua crescita, è attualmente gestito da quattro admin, che monitorano costantemente le attività, riuscendo a soffocare tentativi di flame generati da utenti fake o semplici "keyboard warriors."

Biography, by Mattia Mancini

Alberto Angela (b. Paris, 8 April 1962) is the most famous and beloved scientific communicator in contemporary Italian TV broadcasting. The TV audience share keeps growing and his fandom presents features that are unexpected for the topic he treats. This is why he became a character with a wide audience, with no distinction for genre, age, or social class.

An asteroid was named after him (80652 Albertoangela), and also a new species of gastropod (*Prunum albertoangelai*).

His celebrity can be compared to one of a rock star or a movie star, and can be only

partially explained by the social media communication and by the popularity already gained by his father, Piero Angela. He is a journalist and the first scientific communicator when TV was first introduced in Italy in the year 1954.

Before following the steps of his popular father, Alberto Angela studied in Italy and abroad, earning a degree in natural science in Rome from La Sapienza University, and then a doctorate in paleontology and palaeoanthropology, taking courses at Harvard, Columbia University, and UCLA. In the '80s, he was involved in research activities and took part in international excavation missions in archaeological sites among the most famous for dinosaurs fossils, extinct mammals, and hominids: Ishango, in Zaire (today Democratic Republic of Congo), Olduvai and Laetoli in Tanzania, the Awash Valley in Ethiopia - where he was caught in an ambush by a local tribe – and also Oman and the Gobi Desert in Mongolia.¹

It was actually thanks to his experience in Africa that he first entered the media world: In 1989, he had his first job at RAI.² He was the author of two documentaries, both shot at the Serengeti National Park (Tanzania): *A Day on Earth 2 Million Years Ago* and *Leopard*. From this moment on, Angela would never stop working for Italian television, even if his first TV broadcast, as creator, screenwriter, and host, was *Albatros*, a TV show for science popularization, which was broadcast in 1990 on the Swiss television (RTSI). It was only after some time on the Italian private broadcast network Telemontecarlo, that Alberto Angela had his real debut in Italy.

¹<http://www.rai.it/dl/RaiTV/programmi/media/ContentItem-5ecfeb95-1a75-4260-be84-1e5a7583be0a.html?p=1>

² N. B.: Radiotelevisione italiana S.p.A, roughly equivalent to PBS or the BBC.

As mentioned before, Piero Angela was the first journalist to host for Italian Television - in 1971 with *Destination Man*, and in 1981 with the famous *Quark* - TV shows that treated scientific topics in an authoritative way, and yet in a simple and appealing language.

Alberto Angela's career as a TV host started in his father's programs, such as *The Planet of the Dinosaurs* (1993; fig. 01), *Superquark* (1995-2017), *Journey into Space* (1998), and *Superquark Specials* (1999-2015) where he would star as author and specialist correspondent.³ Furthermore, thanks to his knowledge of English and French, Angela dubbed his own reportage when the shows were exported, thus growing in popularity outside Italy as well.

While continuing to collaborate with Piero, Alberto developed his own way of communicating which was quite new for the Italian audience. He created new formats and gained success both with audience and critics: in 1997, *Northwest Passage* - a magazine TV show that broadcast short documentaries on archaeology, anthropology, history, and science (fig. 02) - in the year 2000 the specials of *Ulysses - The Pleasure of Discovery*, that used the same format as *Superquark Specials*.

Alberto's definitive consecration as scientific communicator was with *Tonight in...*, the primetime TV program that since 2015 has showcased episodes focused on the most admired sites of Italy. The sites are described in the incomparable atmosphere between sunset and dawn, with episodes such as "Tonight at the Egyptian Museum in Turin," in Florence, in Saint Peter's, and in

Venice. The last two episodes, in particular, had an audience of 25% of market share.⁴

Alberto Angela Offline: Books and Events, by Astrid D'Eredità

Before becoming an online mass media phenomenon, Alberto Angela's success arose on television and translated into new forms of expression on printed paper and live performances (fig. 03).

Since the late 1980s, Angela has been co-author with his father, journalists and other cultural communication experts of many books about scientific divulgation published mainly by Mondadori, an Italian book publisher. These works are a natural extension of the television experience to which they are thematically closely related at the thematic level.⁵

However, since 2007, the topics discussed have changed. The essays on the origins of humanity and the cosmos, which characterized his first scientific production were replaced with archaeological and historical topics the themes of a distinct archaeological field of artistic history. It begins with a fascinating series on Roman history that contains an episode title like "Love and Sex in Old Rome" (Rome-Milan 2012), followed by "Trip to the Sistine Chapel: Discovering the Greatest Artistic Treasure of All Time" (Milan-City of the Vatican 2013) and "Alberto Angela Tells the Bronze of Riace: The Adventure of Two Heroes Returned from the Sea" (Milan 2014).

These are, as is evident, much broader issues and known to most who have the advantage of being immediately recognizable,

⁴ <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/spettacoli/alberto-angela-campione-ascolti-stanotte-san-pietro-1346553.html> 02/07/2017.

⁵ See, for example, the volumes *Squali* (Milan 1997) and *Mostri Marini* (Milan 2001) written with Piero Angela and the journalist and underwater photographer Alberto Luca Recchi.

³ <http://www.ulisse.rai.it/dl/portali/site/personaggio/ContentSet-302a97cf-49ad-4608-b1da-3cb176e904ad-list.html?ContentItem-7d26d130-4d96-406b-bd08-a28612a0ca64>

but are not generally subject to a thorough knowledge, too.

Angelo's oeuvre of cultural and popular work, therefore, with the addition of great high resolution images and boxes containing focus on related themes, has all the features to become a best seller (fig. 04).

Between 2014 and 2016, three other books conquered Italian charts: *The Three Days of Pompeii: 23 to 25 October 79 CE: Hour by Hour the Greatest Tragedy of Antiquity* (Milan-Rome 2014); *Saint Peter: Secrets and Wonders in a Two-Year Tales* (Milano 2015); *The Eyes of Gioconda: Leonardo's Genius Told by Mona Lisa* (Milan 2016).

These annual book releases were followed, *ça va sans dire*, by several promotional presentations. These events soon became a growth factor for the fandom: Fan club reunions and meetings all over Italy translated into an opportunity to step outside the written pages to reach reality (fig. 05).

The success of these editorial experiences was so wide that Alberto Angela's great fanbase has successfully contributed in 2015 to a charity project.⁶

Part of the revenues from *The Three Days of Pompeii*, published by Rizzoli Rai-Eri, has been devoted to help restore the fresco of Adone Wounded in the archaeological site of Pompeii. It is a beautiful and rare megalography depicting Adonis dying in the

⁶ Pronouncement by Superintendent Massimo Osanna collected by the androkonos news agency: "Non posso che plaudire all'impegno di divulgazione e conoscenza che Angela con la sua attività e il suo libro sta operando ma anche alla scelta dell'editore di destinare una parte degli introiti delle vendite al restauro di un affresco di Pompei. E' decisamente uno degli esempi di collaborazione pubblico-privata che più auspichiamo, capaci di coniugare interventi di salvaguardia con la promozione e la diffusione della conoscenza di uno dei siti archeologici più importanti al mondo." See: http://www.adnkronos.com/cultura/2015/08/24/pompei-rivive-affresco-adone-ferito-restauro-grazie-fondi-del-libro-alberto-angela_mR6NLIQIqHfEKHCveienM.html.

arms of Aphrodite which is located in the vitidarium (garden) of the homonymous Pompeian house.

The restoration has been funded by the then called Special Superintendency for Archaeological Heritage of Pompeii, Herculaneum and Stabia, along with 4% of sales proceeds. The first of its kind, the donation had in August 2015 great media resonance and received positive comments also at institutional level, contributing to further boosting volume sales.

In addition to popular gatherings when presenting books or in the context of scientific conferences, Alberto Angela's great appeal to his fandom is clearly evident on the occasion of cultural industry fair and events.

The paleontologist has since been a guest of the Mediterranean Exchange of Archaeological Tourism (MEAT) in Paestum (Salerno, Italy), which takes place in the most important exhibition hall in the world dedicated to archaeological heritage, occurring annually at the end of October.⁷ It is a place for the study and debate on cultural heritage and tourism issues; meeting place for professional business, touristic and cultural operators and for travelers.

Angela's performances went every single year sold out: this kind of success made necessary to find new locations for his speeches from year to year. First it was the MEAT indoor halls, then the Basilica of Paestum, which initially hosted the appointments, and last the area around the Greek temple of Hera. The old sanctuary welcomed in 2015 the lesson about the last hours of Pompeii during the eruption of the Vesuvius in 79 CE.

Furthermore, as part of his perennial collaboration with the specialist periodical *Archeologia Viva*, Alberto Angela is also

⁷ <http://www.borsaturismoarcheologico.it/>

generally a guest in various initiatives promoted by director Piero Pruneti.

He is the main force in important public conferences, mainly focused on his books, which have been very successful in public. Just to name a few, recent appearances in the Aquileia Film Festival and in Tourism A - International Archaeological Exhibition in Florence which generated in 2015 and 2016 book signing events ended at night.⁸

How the Fandom Was Born: The Origins of Angelers, by Antonia Falcone

On 8 April 2016, the *Facebook* group “Angelers - Fan of Alberto Angela” was formed, on the occasion of the fifty-fourth birthday of the cultural popularizer. The choice of dedicating a Facebook page to him was taken after a thorough consideration of the dynamics of social communication and of social media marketing. A group was better suited to build a social community, with a more structured organization rather than a fanpage, where the communication between admin and subscribers is less interactive.

The purpose of the group, right from the start, was to interface and facilitate the connection between fans of the TV shows and books of Alberto Angela. During the months before the creation of the group, through an online activity of monitoring on various social media, it had been pointed out the ability of penetration of the content regarding the TV showman.

The sharing on a wide range of interview, of the episodes of *Ulysses - The Pleasure of Discovery*, broadcast on Saturday during primetime, and of the many memes dedicated to Alberto Angela, associated with an unexpected virality for someone who deals with cultural divulgation, perfectly suited the

⁸ https://www.fondazioneaquileia.it/articolo-it-aquileia_film_festival_rassegna_internazionale_di_-221-0-1.html; <http://www.tourisma.it/home/>

definition of “mass phenomenon.”⁹ In particular, the official facebook page of Alberto Angela that today has 800,000 likes and the official page of the TV show, that has almost 100,000 likes were able to gather hundreds of comments for each post, without being involved in flaming.¹⁰

The outbreak of Alberto Angela as social media phenomenon became evident in 2015 after the broadcast of the first episode of the famous series *Tonight in...*. The episode of 28 May 2015, centred on the Egyptian Museum in Turin, was seen by almost 3.5 million people, with a market share of 15%. On the one hand, the TV show was new in the RAI television programming, and, on the other hand, it drew attention to the importance of this TV showman. It increased the potential of a low profile approach to cultural topics, to bring them within everyone’s reach, while avoiding scoops or banalizations.

The episode dedicated to Florence, broadcast in June 2016, was the main reason for the creation of the group Angelers - Fans of Alberto Angela. We examined the situation: Online content was easy to find, the appeal of this public character was well known, and the lack of a social media space dedicated exclusively to his fans was clearly a void. So Antonia Falcone and Astrid d’Eredità, both archaeologists and experts in digital communication, founded the group. During the first steps of the creation of the group, the founders considered the targets of the group: On the one hand, this was made mainly by highly-educated subscribers (graduates or post graduates), on the other, a broad part of the fanpage is formed by

⁹ <http://www.ulisse.rai.it/dl/portali/site/page/Page-e29c43b9-9f6c-4ef4-b010-35eeb6679fce.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/alberto.angela.ufficiale/>; <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=ulisse%20-%20il%20piacere%20della%20scoperta>

students, or people who have an average level of education.¹¹

The predominance of women among the subscribers can be referred to the reputation of Alberto Angela as “sex symbol,” and this is based mainly on his “captivating” style while presenting the cultural contents of his shows, and also on the impact he has on fans during the live presentations of his books. Approachability, amiability, and charm, are the most common words when we analyze the interactions on the official web pages and on the *Facebook* group.

The group started with a few hundred subscribers in the first month (April 2016) and just a few months later (December 2016), we crossed the threshold of 5000 fans: Word of mouth on social media and the circulation of memes and videos created by the users drew new subscribers.¹² Once we passed this milestone, the group has had a staggering growth, thanks to internal suggestions: The Angelers group features among the suggested groups on *Facebook* if you are following Alberto Angela, Piero Angela, and *Ulisse*. In less than a month (January 2017), we reached 10,000 fans. The cross-referencing within Facebook generates peaks in the subscriptions, concentrated in some days or weeks. As of this writing (4 July 2017), the group has 20,300 members.

The community was managed independently by the founder and co-founder during the first months: The activity of community management consisted mainly in accepting new subscriptions, interacting in the comments, and posting links or images from the web.

Because the number of users kept growing, it was necessary to involve new admins who could constantly monitor the

group dynamics: Giovina Caldarola and Stefania Piccin entered the picture. The growth of the fanbase brought a peak in the engagements: Comments, posts, and the first conflicts in managing the group. While the main subject of the group is cultural communication, especially the programs and books provided by Alberto Angela, it is also true that there is a constant risk of flaming in the comments. Our dedication in creating a group with no cases of trolls, fake news, or off-topic posts means that we need to monitor the group 24/7. Removing posts, moderating comments, and removing unwelcome members are all the daily tasks of an admin. We decided to immediately publish the posts, without previous approval, because of the live activity of the group. During the episodes of *Ulysses* or *Tonight in...*, our community posts live comments, memes, and images. If we had to approve each one of them, the interactions would be less immediate. This choice makes the task of the admins more complicated, but this is also a way to maintain the spirit of this community.

One more aspect that was discussed while creating the community regarded the subjects that needed to be considered off topic. During the first months, there were posts with a cultural subject but not strictly referring to Alberto Angela, and some subscribers were in favour of approving them, while others were strongly against accepting them. Eventually we decided for the more focused option: The reason was that since there are many *Facebook* groups focused on cultural subjects, to avoid an overlapping of content, we had to remove irrelevant posts and stick to the original policy of the group.

It was necessary to create a strict policy, summed up in the so called Tablets of the Angelic Law, ten ironical commandments, to clarify the rules for the new subscribers (fig. 06).

¹¹ For the user demographic analysis, compare paragraph “User Demographics” and internal polls to the group <https://goo.gl/gbvVB0>

¹² Compare paragraph “User Generated Content.”

The Features of a Social Trend, by Giovina Caldarola

The celebrity of Alberto Angela as scientific popularizer on TV broadcast reached social media in the most natural way. It is interesting to observe how the cultural communication that was featured on a regular TV format became a trend on the web thanks to its host.

One of the most famous and successful TV shows, commented and shared on social media, is *Ulysses, the Pleasure of Discovery*, broadcast on Saturday night. Each episode is focused on a historical or scientific subject, and analysed in the many multidisciplinary links and connections that complement the main subject.

The other TV show that counts many followers on social media is *North West Passage*, that does not last as long as *Ulysses* and that is not broadcast not in prime time, but sometimes in the morning, or in the afternoon, and during weekends. Each episode has a special focus: People, or faraway places, or forgotten civilization, or archaeological sites.

Then comes the TV series of *Tonight in...*, that guarantees a strong audience base: The recent episode dedicated to Venice (13 June 2017) reached nearly 5 million viewers (25% market share).¹³

Tonight at Saint Peter's, broadcast on 27 December 2016, reached nearly 6 million viewers, proved the format was successful, and justified proclaiming its host as “king of scientific popularizers.”¹⁴

The success on TV corresponds to the reactions on social media, specifically Twitter and Facebook.

Twitter

Live tweeting TV events is by now a well-established tradition in the era of social media. Online TV conversations on TV programs have become crucial to the success rate for broadcasts. In fact, all of these changes that involve the public, broadcasters and the major social platforms, are called Social TV.¹⁵

Twitter has also evolved in this direction: The microblogging structure, the speed of diffusion, and the need to use just 140 characters for each text, makes its use slender and simple, especially when you refer to it for communication purposes.

The platform, called content-based public social content, through a proper use of hashtags makes it a readily identifiable and commentable topic of interest, in this case a TV broadcast, even after the airing.

The concentrated use of a hashtag from many users makes the topic of interest appear in trend topics on Twitter: This is an index of popularity in the case of television broadcasts. In this way, it increases exponentially the interest and will further increase the number of viewers.

But why does Social TV earn so much success?

On Twitter, a large number of users have the ability to generate a healthy ironic thread, especially during live tweeting. This

¹³ <http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/Rai-Alberto-Angela-risultato-formidabile-ascolti-Stanotte-a-Venezia-vince-la-cultura-3491d762-b46f-4d1b-9087-3945c395e8e0.html>

¹⁴ <http://tvzap.kataweb.it/news/188569/ascolti-tv-stanotte-a-san-pietro-trionfa-con-6-milioni-di-tele spettatori/>;
<http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/12/28/limpresa->

[titanica-di-alberto-angela-straccia-la-concorrenza-constanotte-a-san-pietro/3284591/](http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/12/28/limpresa-titanica-di-alberto-angela-straccia-la-concorrenza-constanotte-a-san-pietro/3284591/)

¹⁵ Colombo, Fausto. *Social TV. Produzione, esperienza e valore nell'era digitale*. Milano: Egea 2015.; Colletti, Gianpaolo and Materia, Andrea. *Social TV. Guida alla nuova tv nell'era di Facebook e Twitter*. Milano: Gruppo24ore 2012. Recent data on this phenomenon are on <http://www.engage.it/ricerche/social-tv-19-milioni-italiani-commentano-programmi-tv-sui-social/104994>

phenomenon creates an exaggerated number of users who share, on other platforms, this content which often become memes.

It happens, therefore, that some tweets can become viral to the point they are exported to other channels: All this creates a dramatic increase in traffic and helps to massively increase engagement.

In the specific case of the popularity of Alberto Angela and shows such as *Ulisse - Il piacere della scoperta* or *Stanotte a (city name)*, Twitter assumes a crucial role and the reference hashtag appears to be a steadily trending topic.

Ulysses' episode broadcast in October 2016 on the American Civil War had enormous success on social channels and on twitter in particular. The #Ulisse hashtag included over 1,500 tweets from 630 users that generated over three million impressions (fig. 07).

There have been cases in which, in conjunction with the live tweeting of Angela's transmissions, the hashtag #Angelers related to the fandom also became a trending topic (fig. 08) thanks to a dedicated Twitter profile, which today has nearly 800 followers (fig. 09).

Facebook

Facebook's structure is completely different; it is a social media defined as network-based, where the combinations for the restriction of privacy are numerous, so the contents are not public and searching for hashtags returns no returns optimized results. But what it offers, in terms of interactions and communities, is very important for other aspects. To stay informed about specific topics, we must follow the correct reference thematic channels such as fan pages and groups.

There are numerous fan pages dedicated to Alberto Angela and his broadcasts, many

with tens of thousands of fans, who benefit daily from events and broadcasts that feature him (fig. 10). The Facebook fan page is a showcase for the public character in this case, and is managed by one or more administrators that generate content for their audience. In the fan page, the degree of social interaction is limited to comments and content sharing.

The social places with a social aggregation, different from fan pages, are the Facebook Groups whose structure recalls the forums of the '90s, within which they generated numerous fandoms.¹⁶

Facebook Groups serve as containers where all interested / fans / adepts find other friends in a single virtual room to talk and make their contribution to the cause: Thanks to the "search in the group" function and the use of keywords, it is possible to trace user contributions.

The Facebook group is the perfect place for user-generated-content where the fan feels protagonist and becomes an active member and not just a passive spectator. In this way we give the right space to the group of fans, making them participants rather than leave them as a passive aggregation of users, a phenomenon all too common on social media.

Group Initiatives

One of the first initiatives managed collectively by the community was the creation of the symbol that would identify the group. With the contribution of the first subscribers to the fandom, just a few hundred at the time, the official Angelers logo was developed.

The logo consists of a capital letter, initial and last name of AA, with two wings representing both the similarity of the character's name, as well as a bird's wings to

¹⁶ In the Italian music scene, one of the greatest fandom raised, thanks to the forums, is the *Sorcini*, fan of singer Renato Zero.

reference Twitter, the platform where he originated the fandom. The full color blue of the logo recalls once again to Twitter, confirming the similarity with the male character and the reference of the angelic name (fig. 11).

Since its inception, the group has distinguished itself in several projects to support cultural and charitable activities. In the summer of 2016, following a violent earthquake in the center of Italy, the community has promoted two crowdfunding initiatives to support people affected by the earthquake. Money contributions are derived from the sale of gadgets with the #Angelers logo launched on the Teezily online platform (and then Teespring platform) to allow anyone to monitor the sales process.¹⁷

The first crowdfunding proposed by the users, which was welcomed positively by the whole community, has collected a small but significant cash contribution donated to the Italian Red Cross. All collection and donation operations were shared on the group to ensure maximum transparency of the transaction.

The large, participatory group of users has also been as enthusiastic reaction company, sharing in the group selfies and pictures of tshirts and purchased gadgets. Due to the high and pressing demand for new members, another special sales campaign was launched, #Angelers for Italy, with the same charitable purpose in mind (figs. 12-14)

Where gadgets were not enough, the fans sometimes worked differently: One of the Angelers went further by being tattooed with the logo directly on their forearm (fig. 15).

¹⁷ First campaign: <https://www.teezily.com/stores/angelers-specialedition>; second campaign: <https://teespring.com/it/angelers>

User Demographics

At present (July 2017), the fandom has over 20K members, mostly of Italian nationality, with a concentration in the central-northern regions. There is also a small but substantial presence of users resident abroad.

Subscribers to the fandom cover a range of ages ranging from 21 to 60 years, which is a testimony to the interest a large share of the Italian population has in the phenomenon.

The female gender is predominant in the group, due to the aesthetic appreciation for humans, a never-to-be-forgotten feeling of fans and often celebrated offline.

The field of study, but especially the employment sector, is very wide. In the group's early days, a majority of members were students and graduates in the humanities. At present, however, it is not possible to define a predominant training and workplace as a witness to the fact that Angelers fandom is mirrored by anyone who has passion or simply curiosity towards the cultural sector and scientific information.

This is a significant data especially in the social sphere, where the phenomenon of fake news is widespread.

Used Generated Content

One month after the opening of the group, in May 2016, two Angelers took part in an event attended by AA. At the end of the event, the two girls managed to approach him to tell him about the existence of the fandom dedicated to him, and AA as a response, gave a videomessage where he thanked the members and wished good luck.

The video, posted in the group, was a great success and thanks to the many shares contributed to the subsequent growth of the group.

The original post was lost, but the video

was retrieved and published again as a topic of conversation on the page.

Fever Angelers brings the fandom wherever there is an event which will host AA, including opening events, presentations at scientific conferences, books signings and other opportunities to meet him are many. His availability is such as to give space to all the fans who are eagerly waiting to greet him, to give personalized autographs of copies of his books and to take a picture with him.

These events certainly have a considerable influence on the growth of the group: The Angelers participate in events with recognition banners (T-shirts, banners, signs) on which stands the logo that captures the visual attention of the public present. Photos and video are then posted on the group and shared on personal channels, generating interest and increasing the degree of user involvement.

Fandom today has intensely shares content (text, link, video) related to a wide variety of cultural topics, often subject to constructive discussions and discussions. Widespread visual content creation has made it necessary to open dedicated *Pinterest* and *Instagram* channels, which serve as archives (figs. 16, 17).

The group also rallies on *Telegram* and on this platform, to mark the achievement of 20,000 fans, Angelers BOT was launched, an automatic content generator of memes, gifs, videos, and famous phrases of Alberto Angela, which help the users themselves (fig. 18).

Currently, the #Angelers group dedicated to Alberto Angela turns out to be the only one existing for many subscribers (fig. 19).

Analysis of the Phenomenon, by Antonia Falcone

“Online fandoms are complex social communities that leverage the power of the

internet to create their own unique ways of communicating and relating to each other and the world. Many fans also use online fandom to create original stories, artwork, videos, and more.”¹⁸

We define fandom as a virtual space used to share passions, interests, and admiration for a character, a TV series, a movie saga, etc. With the arrival of the internet, it became easier to group together in communities that shared a common interest.

Forums, websites, and blogs became ideal formats to live collectively and remotely as a fan. With the arrival of social networks, the fandom phenomenon became more complex, because it became possible to share in real time the dynamics of the community: Hashtags for live tweeting, *Facebook* pages and groups, accounts on *Tumblr*, *YouTube* channels, with the chance to pass from on- to offline, through conventions and thematic events.

“With the increase of TV series, lately, producers learned the importance of feed the users with new ways of engagement, and the entertainment is more hypertextual, interactive, and immersive. It is not just a matter of watching, but rather of interpreting, participating to the circulation and creation of contents.”¹⁹

One of the most original aspects introduced with fandom 2.0 is the User Generated Content: Users do not just share content created by the producers, but generate variations on the same subject, that contribute to amplifying the audience. The web allows a massive circulation of content, and this helps increase attention on the phenomenon of the moment.

In the fandom area different connections interlace: Between fans and the character/TV

¹⁸https://www.academia.edu/10017674/Storytelling_through_Online_Fandom, p. 2.

¹⁹https://www.academia.edu/29796276/Il_fandom_diffuso,

series/music band; among fans; between fans and the admins: “Fans are then grouped into fan cultures, which work as a structured network that run parallel to the production of the text supporting fans and giving them chances to find other viewers that have formed a similar, strong connection.”²⁰

The group Angelers - Fan of Alberto Angela, follows the same dynamics that we presented so far, in fact it enhances some aspects, as it defines itself as a niche phenomenon. A community which groups around a cultural communicator is certainly anomalous in the fandom universe, because it implies that the community shares “deep” interests, and each member of the group feels like he is assigned a high mission: to be the spokesperson of a cultural interest. The group becomes an “exclusive club.” There is one instance that exemplifies this feeling within the group: each member credits him/herself of preferring to pass Saturday evening watching a cultural show on TV, rather than going to the disco or out with friends. A way to differentiate from the masses, and to feel the uniqueness of belonging to a community with shared interests.

An aspect that is equally important, is the “*phisque du role*” of Alberto Angela, who is far from the stereotypical figure of the homely intellectual. This, together with friendliness, humility, and attentiveness to the fans, makes Alberto Angela perfectly suitable to a fan club. Angela’s fans are easily recognisable, and this is a bonding element especially offline, at book signings or conferences around Italy.

The chance of meeting Alberto Angela, or to engage the passage from the virtual world to the real one, overturns - temporarily - the dynamics of the online fandom. Fans would recognise one another by showing off the

swag items that give them the feeling they belong to the group, by introducing themselves as Angelers, and by sharing with the rest of the community this event of meeting their favourite TV star.

When you start forming a group, you start from a single story, and then many individual stories that interlace together: the creation of contents follows the sharing of one’s experiences and feelings that “Online fandom, therefore, is an influential tool through which people can tell individual and collective stories of their lives and the things about which they are passionate. The tale of online fandom itself is a compelling, powerful narrative.”²¹

While all fandoms are recognisable for some, distinctive, features, such as:

- shared interest
- interaction and connection among the members
- respect of the group policy
- pursuit of a special relationship with the subject of the fanclub
- mutual recognition
- same codes of communication

The Angelers group adds the peculiar feature of focusing around a character that became a rockstar celebrity of cultural communication, capable of attracting thousands of people on occasions such the presentations of his books and of achieving the prime time, with a market share adequate to an entertaining show.

This is what transforms a simple fandom into a social phenomenon (figs. 20, 21).

Bibliography

Baim, Nancy K. *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press 2010.

²⁰ <http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/film-tv/files/2014/12/Paul-Harris-Fandom-Studies-Entry.pdf>

²¹ https://www.academia.edu/10017674/Storytelling_through_Online_Fandom, p. 11.

- Colletti, Gianpaolo and Materia, Andrea. *Social TV. Guida alla nuova tv nell'era di Facebook e Twitter*. Milano: Gruppo24ore 2012.
- Colombo, Fausto. *Social TV. Produzione, esperienza e valore nell'era digitale*. Milano: Egea 2015.
- Cossignani, Tiziano "Una nuova marginella dalla Colombia (Gastropoda: Prosobranchia, Marginellidae)". *Malacologia Mostra Mondiale* 47, no. 6 (2005).
- Everett, Anna and Caldwell, John.T. *New Media. Theories and practices of Digitextuality*. New York: Routledge 2003.
- Fiske, John. "The Cultural Economics of Fandom". In *The Adoring Audience. Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lewis, Lisa A., 30-49. London & New York: Routledge 1992.
- Grasso, Aldo and Scaglioni, Massimo. *Che cos'è la televisione*, Milano: Garzanti 2003.
- Hills, Matt. *Fan cultures*, London: Routledge 2003.
- Nikunen, Kaarina. "The Intermedial Practises of Fandom." *Nordicom Review* 28, no. 2 (2007): 111-128.
- Scaglioni, Massimo. *La tv dopo la tv: il decennio che ha cambiato la televisione*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero 2011.
- Sitography**
- Aquileia Film Festival Foundation, <https://www.fondazioneaquileia.it/articolo-it-aquileia-film-festival-rassegna-internazionale-di-221-0-1.html>.
- Carbonaro, Massimiliano. *Ascolti tv, Stanotte a San Pietro trionfa con 6 milioni di telespettatori*, <http://tvzap.kataweb.it/news/188569/ascolti-tv-stanotte-a-san-pietro-trionfa-con-6-milioni-di-telespettatori/> (consulted on 14 July 2017).
- Facebook, *Alberto Angela – Pagina Fan Ufficiale*, <https://www.facebook.com/alberto.angela.ufficiale/>.
- Facebook, *Angelers – Fan di Alberto Angela*, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/angelers/>.
- Francese, Ivan. *Alberto Angela campione di ascolti con "Stanotte a San Pietro"*, <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/spettacoli/alberto-angela-campione-ascolti-stanotte-san-pietro-1346553.html>, (consulted on 2 July 2017).
- Harris, Paul. *Fandom Studies*, <http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/film-tv/files/2014/12/Paul-Harris-Fandom-Studies-Entry.pdf>, (consulted on 9 July 2017).
- Heiden, Kat. *Storytelling through Online Fandom*, https://www.academia.edu/10017674/Storytelling_through_Online_Fandom, (consulted on 9 July 2017).
- NASA, *80652 Albertoangela (2000 BB)*, <https://ssd.jpl.nasa.gov/sbdb.cgi?sstr=80652&orb=1>, (consulted on 2 July 2017).
- Naso, Domenico. *L'impresa titanica di Alberto Angela: straccia la concorrenza con "Stanotte a San Pietro"*, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/12/28/limpresa-titanica-di-alberto-angela-straccia-la-concorrenza-con-stanotte-a-san-pietro/3284591/> (consulted on 14 July 2017).
- Nieddu, Giulia. *Il fandom diffuso*, https://www.academia.edu/29796276/Il_fandom_diffuso, (consulted on 9 July 2017).
- Osanna, Massimo. <http://www.adnkronos.com/cultura/2015/08/24/pompei-rivive-affresco-adone-ferito-restauro-grazie-fondi-del-libro-alberto->

[angela_mR6NLIQIqdHfEKHcveienM.html](#)

RAI, *Che tempo che fa 13/03/10*,

<http://www.rai.it/dl/RaiTV/programmi/media/ContentItem-5ecfeb95-1a75-4260-be84-1e5a7583be0a.html?p=1>, (consulted on 2 July 2017).

RAI, *Ulisse – Il Piacere della scoperta*,

<http://www.ulisse.rai.it/dl/portali/site/page/Page-e29c43b9-9f6c-4ef4-b010-35eeb6679fce.html>, (consulted on 2 July 2017).

Varpi C., *Social TV: 1,9 milioni di italiani commentano i programmi tv sui social ogni settimana*,

<http://www.engage.it/ricerche/social-tv-19-milioni-italiani-commentano-programmi-tv-sui-social/104994>, (consulted on 2 July 2017).

Teezily,

<https://www.teezily.com/stores/angelers-specialedition>

Teespring, <https://teespring.com/it/angelers>

The Mediterranean Exchange of Archaeological Tourism in Paestum (Salerno, Italy),

<http://www.tourisma.it/home/>

Tourisma - International Archaeological Exhibition in Florence,

<http://www.tourisma.it/home/>

<http://www.borsaturismoarcheologico.it/>

Rai, *ascolti formidabili per 'Stanotte a Venezia'*. Alberto Angela: "Ha vinto la cultura",

<http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/Rai-Alberto-Angela-risultato-formidabile-ascolti-Stanotte-a-Venezia-vince-la-cultura-3491d762-b46f-4d1b-9087-3945c395e8e0.html> (consulted on 14 July 2017).