Ask for a print version and we will send it to your home address.

EDITORIAL UNIVERSITAS, S.A.

Prensas de la Universidad
Universidad Zaragoza
1542

Scopus

CLARIVATE ANALYTICS
EMERGING SOURCES CITATION INDEX
INDEXED

2021 CALIDAD REVISTAS CIENTÍFICAS ESPAÑOLAS
FECYT
Buenas Prácticas Editoriales en Igualdad de Género

SUMMARY / *SUMARIO*

EDITORIAL / *EDITORIAL*

SPECIAL ISSUE **BRANDED CONTENT: NEW FORMS OF BRAND COMMUNICATION** / *MONOGRÁFICO* **BRANDED CONTENT: NUEVAS FORMAS DE COMUNICACIÓN DE MARCA**

Editorial

Dr. Victoria Tur-Viñes

Universidad de Alicante. Spain. Victoria.tur@gcloud.ua.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8442-8068

Academic ambitions

Ambiciones académicas

Ambition, in the right measure, enables challenges to be met, activates the achievement of goals, and makes improvements possible. Low ambition means conformity with mediocrity, which is not desirable. But high ambition can generate too high a cost in the process of achieving the challenge. That intense, emotionally charged desire that guides the pursuit of hard-to-achieve goals can be managed in many ways. Finding the right measure, the perfect balance is the real challenge. To feel the impulse of the achievement of the challenge as motivation and to measure the consequences of the path to be followed, knowing the limits of what is acceptable, comes to be something of an art. Ambition often, finds lies and betrayals to be fellow-travellers. For the sake of ambition, lying is legitimised because it eases the route to the desired challenge. Betrayal, which feeds on disloyalty, distorts moral dilemmas (those that connect us to the essence of what is human), lightens the process prior to achievement and filters out due appreciation. An earthly version of *Game of Thrones* or an updated *Macbeth*. Integrity over ambition.

Within the university we find great stories of ambition, betrayal, mediocrity and lies, intermingled with admirable performances and honest trajectories. Any member of the university community has a story (or more) to tell, in his or her background. The endemic problems we suffer are a consequence of different circumstances: practising individualism, the cult of one's own ego and placing this above authentic collaborative work, the enjoyment of other people's successes and the due recognition of other contributions. What would the collective be like if things were different?

Ambition also affects institutions, as entities made up of people, and can be imposed, when not desired. Journals were never created to certify university researchers. This is a function assigned by Aneca (Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation) in a system that overvalues the scientific article as a product derived from research. Assessing the quality of a text by the indexation level of the journal in which it is published is a mistake. It is also a mistake to think that texts submitted over a long period of time can be assessed qualitatively. It is humanly, temporally and technically impossible to study in depth the content of all the merits provided by those who apply for accreditation, due to the volume of applications and the existing regulatory limitations on the number of members who can make up the commissions. It does seem possible to address the five merits that are selected for the application for recognition of a six-year research period, which may or may not be consecutive, or the four preferred merits that are required when completing the application form for accreditation applications. Let us not forget that, when a scientific article is published, it has undergone a process of blind peer review. In this review process, qualitative aspects are considered. Accordingly, claiming that the qualitative aspects of the merits presented in an accreditation are not taken into account is not accurate.

We move in this direction. The pressure to publish (ambition) entrammels the routes to achieve it (lies and betrayal). Iterative publications. Simultaneous submissions to several journals that collapse the system, rendering it unsustainable. Standardised plagiarism. Co-authorship conflicts. Revealing texts alongside others with no substantive contributions. Professors who prefer research to teaching and request a reduction of course load… This is just a selected repertoire of practices which can be observed and do not go unnoticed. Unbridled ambition, badly managed, clouds ethics.

Aneca can make a mistake in commissioning a report, but it cannot make a mistake in the decision to judge its content because then it calls into question all its work in defence of the quality of the system, returning to the dark days. *The night is dark and full of horrors*.

The ambition of journals to be indexed in databases is also shared by those who read and publish in them. Sensitised journals seek this recognition, and enter into a complex process where their citation and publication capacity is compared with other journals, generating rankings, percentiles and other indicators. Indeed, it is not only journals that suffer an avalanche of texts from this pandemic to be published. Databases also feel the pressure. In journals there is a delay between the receipt of a text and the editorial decision due to excessive demand and the increased number of reviews in a finite field. In databases, delays are caused between the admission of a journal for compliance with the mandatory quality requirements and the calculation of its CiteScore in Scopus, to mention the case of Mediterranean. The journal was admitted in December 2020; in the subsequent months the contract was signed, the last three years of publications were indexed and now a few more months are needed to create the journal's own internal space with its own metrics. The process has already taken more than a year, in the era of information technology.

Clarivate, for its part, has launched a new metric in 2021, the Journal Citation Indicator (JCI), to complement the classic Journal Impact Factor (JIF). The JCI takes the previous three years into account (JIF only two years), hence allowing the accumulation of a higher number of citations. The JIF calculation is based on citations made in the current year, while the Journal Citation Indicator (JIC) computes citations from any period of time after publication, up to the end of the current year. This new, more realistic indicator allows ESCI journals to have impact metrics, where Mediterranean already was, and provides a unique number that takes into account the specific characteristics of the different fields and their publications. This is essential in a field as transversal and peculiar as Communication. Thus, in its first year of indexing with metrics in Clarivate, the journal has attained in 2021 a JCI percentile of 0.40 (Q3), with a position of 129 out of 204 indexed Communication journals. This is a positive figure that gives us room for ambition. We will continue to work along these lines.

Mediterranean's social ambition and the incorporation of new collaborators in the team allow us to explore new spaces for exchange, such as the Mediterranean dissemination channel on WhatsApp, which was created with a purely informative (unidirectional) character, although at any time in the future, if requested by the community around the journal, it could become a space for bidirectional conversation. This will only become apparent over time. We also started a space on Instagram and LinkedIn. We are driven by the desire to disseminate more and better Communication research.

This issue features twenty-six texts, three editorials and two reviews. It includes two monographs that aroused enormous interest among researchers, judging by the number of submissions received. Of the two monographs, the first contains eight articles on the subject of **Minors creating content on video platforms: regulation and self-regulation in the communicative socio-system** and has been coordinated by Dr. Esther Martínez Pastor (Rey Juan Carlos University, Spain), Dr. Rodrigo Cetina Presuel (Harvard University, USA) and Dr. Araceli Castelló Martínez (University of Alicante, Spain). Childhood and spaces of influence go hand in hand on the video platforms, discovering new research opportunities. The second monograph was the most successful of all of those promoted to date, coordinated by Dr. Patricia Núñez Gómez (Complutense University of Madrid, Spain), Dr. Luis Mañas Viniegra (Complutense University of Madrid, Spain) and Dr. Jonathan Hardy (University of the Arts London, London College of Communication, UK) under the title **Branded content: new forms of brand communication** comes to light with twelve texts revealing the significance of this line of communication in current research in the field.

We would like to thank those who have coordinated these two monographs for their dedication, involvement and criteria in guiding the texts and appointing reviewers. At Mediterranean Journal, the coordination of monographs proceeds intensively throughout the process, performing tasks as guest editors.

The issue is rounded off by the permanent *Miscellany* section, which presents six texts on a variety of topics. The first deals with the fraud of advertising metrics, its evolution, analysis and mitigation tools, and is signed by Lidia Maestro-Espínola, David Cordón-Benito and Natalia Abuín-Vences, highlighting its consequences in curbing advertising investments due to the lack of transparency. The new digital media, despite their technology, paradoxically do not increase the quality of audience measurement. Ana-María López-Cepeda and Nicolas Tilli analyse the news coverage of Covid-19 in a comparative way on two television channels, looking at the type of story, volume of news, news sources and their relationships, among other variables. The measurement of Twitter's influence on sporting events, through the process of analytical hierarchy, is the objective of the text by José-María Lamirán-Palomares, Amparo Baviera-Puig and Tomás Baviera-Puig. Writing on the Internet and, specifically, the use of deixis, Majo Pallarés -i-Maiques, the pillars of interface deixis, present an innovative proposal showing the relationship

between the evaluation of advertisements and the presence of a greater repertoire of deixis (more dialogical advertisements). Alicia Martín-García, Marta López Carmona and Juan Salvador Victoria Mas write an article on product placement on Netflix and its perceived benefits. Finally, Inmaculada Sánchez-Labella-Martín, Manuel Garrido and Virginia Guarinos research animation in advertising, as a creative resource for evoking emotions, from a gender perspective.

We hope that reading this issue at the beginning of the new year will stimulate a healthy research ambition, in the sense that everyone wishes, regenerating the system, removing ethical malpractice and decontaminating the path of everything that is not a genuine contribution to scientific knowledge. A final wish: good and numerous reviews, both our own and others', prior to publication. Science feeds on intellectual consensus and continuous improvement.

MONOGRÁFICO / *SPECIAL ISSUE:*

Branded content: nuevas formas de comunicación de marca / *Branded Content: New Forms of Brand Communication*

Editorial 3

Dr. Patricia Núñez-Gómez
Complutense University of Madrid. Spain. pnunezgo@ucm.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3028-9429

Dr. Luis Mañas-Viniegra
Complutense University of Madrid. Spain. lmanas@ucm.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9129-5673

Prof. Jonathan Hardy
University of the Arts London. United Kingdom. jonathan.hardy@lcc.arts.ac.uk. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0150-4799

Branded Content: New Forms of Brand Communications [Editorial]

Branded Content: nuevas formas de comunicación de marca [Editorial]

Branded Content is a type of communication produced by a brand that, through entertainment, information and / or utility formats, has the purpose of communicating its values and connecting with an audience that, upon finding it relevant, voluntarily dedicates their time of attention and provokes a feeling of closeness, a closer relationship with the brand.

This format also allows brands to better communicate their social responsibility and it is the user himself who looks for the content that the brand offers him in a relevant and personalized way, generating virality.

The changes produced in the media ecosystem and the communication paradigm shift have developed different strategies and advertising communication content that not only seek the traditional advertising result, but the objective is to offer valuable content to the audience and establish relationships with it.

Brands must attract the attention of the public within a saturated panorama, with a more critical consumer who chooses their content in a personalized way, turning off advertising when they are not interested.

It is necessary to reflect on these new forms of communication that offer relevant and interesting content, avoiding intrusive, boring and repetitive advertising. The branded content strategy must, in addition, be loyal to the brand and its audiences, offer quality content, providing service to the user, becoming the brand that makes life easier and transferring the values of that brand to the content.

In quality branded content, the content does not have to be directly related to the brand or at least it does not have to be the main object of the communication. They are stories created to excite and that generate value for the user.

Since 2012 the category as "Branded Content" or "Branded Entertainment" has been included in festivals such as EuroBest or Cannes Lions.

The formats within Branded Content are varied and, in this issue, we have the opportunity to review several of them.

We open the issue with the article **Creative Attributes of Branded Content. Analysis of awarded pieces in "El Sol" (2015-2021**). The authors Carmen Llorente Barroso, Ivone Ferreira and Professor Cristóbal Fernández, describe this new communication through the qualitative analysis of the most awarded pieces at this festival. The analysis establishes a common pattern of attributes.

In the following article, **Branded Content and luxury fashion: analysis of audiovisual content on YouTube (2008-2019),** the use of social networks in the democratization of the sector is analyzed. It shows more

than 4000 videos reflecting the formats used by the main luxury brands. The classification carried out and the conclusions offer an interesting starting point for future research. The article has been written by Professor Marina Ramos Serrano, Gema Macías Múñoz, and Professor Antonio Rueda-Treviño.

More specifically, focusing on a brand, the following work titled **Mediterráneamente. Quantitative efficacy study in Estrella Damm's advertising films,**research about the formula they have used for more than 10 years .Taking into account the insights reflected in the communication, an analysis methodology is proposed for this type of content. The article is signed by María Rodríguez-Rabadán, Helena Galán Fajardo and Cristina del Pino-Romero.

In **New automotive advertising formats. Seat Mii by Cosmopolitan. Branded Content aimed at women;** the Case Study is used to analyze the campaigns created by the brand in alliance with the magazine aimed at female audiences. Gema Bonales-Daimiel and Blanca Miguélez-Juan sign the article.

In the article written by Isabel Palomo-Domínguez and Fernando Infante del Rosal called **Critical Review on the Legality of Branded Content in MasterChef Spain**, the limits between the regulation of the television channel and the advertising formats that adopt new forms of communication are analyzed. Based on content analysis and documentary research, it clarifies the lines between different types of advertising and established legality.

The case of a banking brand is studied by Professor Elena Borau-Boira. **Brand Story. The case We learn together from BBVA as a model for brand storytelling**. This case is explained through an adapted narrative model. This model facilitates the work of subsequent investigations.

Virtual influencers as opinion leaders and their use in political communication techniques, reflects on the role of influencers artificially created by brands, since this strategy allows separating the personality of the real influencer from their comments and controlling the communication strategy. It is signed by Isabel Rodrigo-Martín, Daniel Múñoz-Sastre and Luis Rodrigo-Martín.

In The process of brand co-creation through eWOM profiles, attitudes and behavior of users, professors Sonia Carcelén-García and Paloma Díaz-Soloaga. conclude that sociodemographic variables are still fundamental when developing this co-creation system, analyzing more than 1500 consumers.

María Hernández Herrera, Francisco J Gil Ruíz and María Luisa García Guardia, take us into the world of Fashion Film. Starting from a semiotic perspective, they establish associations and extract meanings about the perception of the brand. The article is **called The fashion film as a brand action. The case of Europa II in Vogue.**

The following article**, New products and services offered to brands by the main Spanish newspapers: branded content and native advertising,** makes us reflect on how journalism is not far to this mode of communication. Daniel Zomeño and Rocío Blay-Arráe, talk to us about how the media become strategic partners, going from being advertising spaces to offering added value to brands**.**

The city brand is analyzed in **Branding in tourist cities: new forms of communication and marketing for the urban policy of an island**. Patricia del Ponti, Almudena Barrientos-Báez and David Caldevilla-Domínguez review the written literature on the Tenerife brand and complete the study with interviews with the main stakeholders, concluding that participation is one of the most important points in the creation of the brand-city.

We finish with the analysis of a current social network and how it is used by a museum, **Short video Content in the brand strategy**. **Analysis of the use of Tik Tok by the El Prado Museum,** written by Eva-Sánchez Amboage, Carlos Toural- Bran, Matías Menbiella-Pollán and Verónica Crespo-Pereiranos explain through content analysis how the strategy is developed to better reach the public.

Dr. Carmen LLORENTE-BARROSO
Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Spain. carmenllorente@ucm.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7710-0956

Dr. Ivone FERREIRA
Universidade Nova de Lisboa/ICNOVA. Portugal. ivoneferreira@fcsh.unl.pt. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3283-2373

Dr. Cristobal FERNÁNDEZ-MUÑOZ
Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Spain. cristfer@ucm.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0201-7741

Creative attributes of branded content: analysis of awarded pieces in "El Sol" (2015-2021)

Atributos creativos del branded content: análisis de piezas premiadas en "El Sol" (2015-2021)

Abstract

Branded content has become one of the most effective creative strategies for brands to achieve a complicit contact with their audiences. The demands of the current communication landscape have forced advertisers to bet on creativity to offer valuable content that involves the target in the construction of the brand itself. The purpose of this research is to identify and explain the creative attributes of branded content using a qualitative methodology. To this end, an analytical recording model was designed, based on previous theories; this was applied to a sample of the 23 pieces that have won a grand prize and/or a gold award at the "El Sol" Festival during its last six editions. The results allow us to delineate a creative pattern of success in branded content strategies, which has remained stable in recent years, and responds to content with affective objectives, often supported by behavioural and/or cognitive nuances; insights that combine, mainly, emotional and cultural aspects, and that articulate promises in the form of benefits for the consumer; emotional arguments; close and empathetic tones that use formats such as storytelling or analogy; and indirect concepts to convey the promises.

Resumen

El branded content se ha impuesto como una de las estrategias creativas de las marcas más eficaces para lograr un contacto cómplice con sus públicos. Las exigencias del panorama comunicativo actual han obligado a los anunciantes a apostar por la creatividad para ofrecer contenidos de valor que involucren al target en la construcción misma de la marca. El propósito de esta investigación es identificar y explicar los atributos creativos del branded content mediante una metodología cualitativa. Para ello, se ha diseñado un modelo de registro analítico, fundamentado en teorías previas, que se ha aplicado a una muestra constituida por las 23 piezas galardonadas con un gran premio y/o un oro en el Festival "El Sol" durante sus últimas seis ediciones. Los resultados permiten delinear un patrón creativo de éxito en las estrategias de branded content, que ha permanecido estable en los últimos años, y responde a contenidos con objetivos afectivos, a menudo apoyados en matices comportamentales y/o cognitivos; insights que combinan, principalmente, aspectos emocionales y culturales, y que articulan promesas en forma de beneficios para el consumidor; argumentaciones emocionales; tonos cercanos y empáticos que utilizan formatos como el storytelling o la analogía; y conceptos indirectos para transmitir las promesas.

Keywords

Branded content; creative concept; creativity; "El Sol" Festival; insight; storytelling

Palabras clave

Concepto creativo; contenido de marca; creatividad; Festival "El Sol"; insight; narración

1. Introduction

The development of the communicative context has driven brands to look for new ways that allow them to have more genuine contact with their targets. Branded content has emerged as a powerful marketing strategy that attracts, informs, and entertains consumers (Daun and Schäfer, 2020), achieving the desired brand-user complicity in the construction of corporate discourse.

For years, branded content has reversed the usual approach of advertising communication, prompting consumers to seek a relationship with the brand through a pleasant, subtle bond, with the user's permission of course, which avoids free rider inserts of the advertiser (Muller, 2016; Panarese and Suárez-Villegas, 2018). Consequently, branded content has changed the brand-consumer relationship, blurring the link of such content to an advertiser (Atal, 2018) and highlighting the product or service, and/or the brand, in the narrative in which they are inserted (Carrascoza, 2020).

Unlike impact-based advertising strategies, branded content reflects corporate values in a higher quality way, encouraging a more intense emotional bond between brand and target audience (Carvajal and Barinagarrementeria, 2019). Nevertheless, merely being motivated to tell stories about a brand and the ability to produce them are not enough to make this type of strategy successful; the brand must know what the audience wants and have channels to disseminate its content (Daun and Schäfer, 2020).

In relation to the diverse types of branded content, the idea must be striking and capable of attracting one's attention. Moreover, the brand needs to differentiate itself and be present from the very beginning of the content creation (Muller, 2016). In this regard, creativity is seen as a key factor in the generation of less intrusive content capable of achieving affinity with consumers in a more dynamic way (De-Aguilera-Moyano, Baños-González and Ramírez-Perdiguero, 2015). Therefore, the purpose of this research is to identify the creative attributes of branded content through a qualitative-interpretative approach that allows us to describe the objectives in detail and explain them as well, along with the type of message and the creative elements used by benchmark branded content in the advertising sector. In this regard, four research questions (RQs) have been posed to guide this work, which are the following:

RQ1. What communication objectives do advertisers pursue in successful branded content strategies?

RQ2. What types of messages does this content convey in relation to the objectives it pursues?

RQ3. What are the most important creative elements (insight, promise, argumentation, formats, and communicative tone) on which benchmark branded content strategies are based?

RQ4. What kind of creative concept is used by well-known branded content items?

Even though several studies have been carried out on branded content, most of them rely on narrative or quantitative perspectives that offer limited insight into the effectiveness of these items as well as some of their creative attributes. This research offers a comprehensive study of the creative elements that characterise preeminent branded content. The results of this analysis are potentially useful, both in the scientific-academic realm as well as the area of knowledge transfer to the sector of creativity applied to brand communication. Furthermore, the findings of this study offer the chance to discover whether there is a creative pattern of success in branded content strategy.

2. Theoretical framework and context

2.1. An approach to the concept and features of branded content

The conceptual complexity of branded content lies in the difficulty of defining both its origin and its nature. Although branded content may seem to be a relatively new strategy, it has been around for almost a century. One of the first examples was that of Popeye, which in 1929 was launched by spinach producers in the United States to promote the consumption of their product among children (Muller, 2016).

To understand the concept of branded content and its strategic underpinning, it is essential to refer to the hybridisation among messages, content, and channels (Rogel-Del-Hoyo and Marcos-Molano, 2020). Choi (2015) states that branded content is a form of communication with a commercial purpose that unifies the brand message (advertising) with the content (programme) in which it is offered. Content becomes "a means of conveying the brand message" (Arroyo-Almaraz and Baños-González, 2018: 247). The conceptual features of branded content have led to its misinterpretation as product placement, native advertising, or branded entertainment, although there are substantial differences between all these terms that must be clarified.

Branded content has been defined as the sophisticated evolution of product placement strategies, where brands become an important part of the narrative, or even the very starting point of a story (Von-

Rimscha, 2015). Furthermore, branded content has been identified with native advertising or brand journalism (Hardy, Macrury and Powell, 2018) and has mistakenly been interpreted as a form of digital advertising when in fact it is part of the broader field of content marketing (Bezbaruah and Trivedi, 2020). Native advertising is a type of brand communication defined by its customisation to the form and/or function (content) of the digital platform on which it is offered (Aribarg and Schwartz, 2020). This form of advertising enjoys greater audience attention when it is embedded in a non-intrusive way in the editorial content without displaying the advertiser's logo (Zamith, Mañas-Viniegra and Núñez-Gómez, 2021).

The term branded content has been used in very close relation with branded entertainment, which takes the form of music videos (Sánchez-Olmos, 2018), theatrical plays, or films sponsored by brands to project their image or promote their products (Choi, 2015). De-Assis-Furtado (2014) considers both terms to be synonyms, while De-Aguilera-Moyano, Baños-González and Ramírez-Perdiguero (2016) or Choi (2015) refer to branded entertainment as a specific type of branded content that combines brand and entertainment in a convergent process involving "a harmonious union" and "subtle hybridisation" (Muller, 2016: 45). Branded entertainment allows brands to produce fictional content in the form of storylines to foster audience expectation, similar to what occurred with soap operas in the early 20th century (Lehu, 2007). Branded content, on the other hand, is a broader concept that fuses the brand with relevant, interesting, or entertaining content (De-Aguilera-Moyano, Baños-González and Ramírez-Perdiguero, 2016), by incorporating it from the initial planning stage of the project in collaboration with cultural, artistic, informative, or sportive sectors (Choi, 2015).

Brands that use branded content strategies seek to entertain, amuse, thrill or surprise their audiences, thereby creating an emotional bond with them (Formoso-Barro, Sanjuán-Pérez and Martínez-Costa, 2016). The success of branded content lies in the fact that it caters to a consumer-oriented pull strategy, offering added value that captures the audience's attention and boosts their engagement (De-Aguilera-Moyano, Baños-González and Ramírez-Perdiguero, 2015; Yakob, 2015). These strategies often use hybrid messages with a non-commercial appearance that generates a greater response among consumers (Bezbaruah and Trivedi, 2020; Carvajal and Barinagarrementeria, 2019; De-Aguilera-Moyano, Baños-González and Ramírez-Perdiguero, 2015), due to their extraordinarily emotional nature (Choi, 2015).

Another characteristic of branded content is its pursuit of a high level of outreach (a high level of dissemination) in order to achieve natural exposure of the message in unpaid media, either through a clear attempt at virality or with the support of eWOM (electronic word of mouth) (Choi, 2015). The features of social media together with the audience's affinity with branded content can provide the much sought-after virality or earned media (Muller, 2016) when interaction with the content is rewarding (Waqas, Hamzah and Mohd-Salleh, 2021). In the digital environment, consumers' dissemination of opinions and content about brands is more persuasive and trustworthy than the brands' own publications, as they are considered altruistic reviews offered by users based on their own consumption experiences (Reimer and Benkenstein, 2018). Hence, user-generated content on social networks leads to a greater intention to make a purchase when compared to postings by brands (Mayrhofer, Jörg, Einwille and Naderer, 2020).

On the other hand, fans of a brand can act as spokespersons, virally spreading brand content among their network of friends (Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Cañabate and Lebherz, 2014). Therefore, it is advisable to design emotional, entertaining content, which, in addition to conveying corporate values, enhances its viralisation by those consumers who have a positive image of the brand (Kulkarni, Kalro, Sharma and Sharma, 2020).

The viral success of branded content on social media through the eWOM strategy is favourably related to the inclusion of interactive features and rich media formats that foster consumer engagement (Moran, Muzellec and Johnson, 2020), especially in relation to experiential or image-based content (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). Thus, brand-consumer interaction is influenced by users' interest in sharing a brand's content and making it relevant, which means there is an inextricable relationship between content virality and engaging the target audience (Segarra-Saavedra and Hidalgo-Marí, 2018). In the digital environment, user engagement is linked to highly creative content, which arouses the interest of the target audience (Lee and Hong, 2016; Lou and Koh, 2018) and motivates them to share such content more decisively and/or generate associated content (Horrigan, 2009; Silva-Barreto, Freitas and Freitas-De-Paula, 2020).

In order for content resulting from a brand-media partnership to be successful, it must benefit the advertiser's brand and generate revenue for the medium, without undermining its credibility and perceived quality (Daun and Schäfer, 2020). When introduced into a news medium, branded content must be characterised by the attributes of journalism, such as rigour, precision, interest, and coherence with the philosophy of the medium (Carvajal and Barinagarrementeria, 2019).

2.2. The different types of branded content

In the previous section, some conceptual confusion between branded content and other terms has been highlighted, which makes it possible to establish categories of branded content. According to Choi (2015), branded entertainment is a type of branded content associated with entertainment, which some authors differentiate from content marketing of an informative or educational nature (Arroyo-Almaraz and Baños-González, 2018; De-Aguilera-Moyano, Baños-González and Ramírez-Perdiguero, 2016). For other researchers, however, content marketing is a more complex, broader concept (Bezbaruah and Trivedi, 2020), which involves a customer-focused, content-driven marketing approach for the purpose of engaging consumers with the brand (Van-Loon, 2019).

Although there is no consensus on lexical labels, an initial taxonomy of branded content allows for its differentiation based on its informative, educational, or entertainment purpose (Aguado-Guadalupe, 2008; De-Aguilera-Moyano, Baños-González and Ramírez-Perdiguero, 2015).

Depending on its purpose, informative content has a stronger effect on the attitude that young Generation Z people have toward the brand, which translates into greater intention to buy and resistance to negative information about the advertised product (Bezbaruah and Trivedi, 2020). These findings are consistent with Lou and Yuan (2019), who conclude that social media audiences nurture their trust and purchase intentions based more on the informative value of the content posted by the influencer they follow, rather than its entertainment value. Kulkarni, Kalro and Sharma (2020) have found that the most active consumers have a strong need for knowledge. Thus, to viralise branded content, they prefer such content to be not only emotional and creative, but informative as well. Such research explains why most branded content on social media is functional, despite the value of creative approaches focused on experiential or image-based messaging in branded content strategies in these spaces (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). However, in order for branded content to be effective on social media, it must be sufficiently relevant and have a strong enough impact in order to engage the target audience (Lou and Koh, 2018), which demands messages that make the target audience "fall in love", and which are delivered in the most appropriate way, place, and time for "the user to be receptive" (Castelló-Martínez, 2018: 87).

Regardless of the type of message they convey, this content can take many different forms, such as videos, blogs, expert opinions, social media posts, podcasts (Bezbaruah and Trivedi, 2020), theatrical performances, recitals, music festivals, games, or activities in public spaces (Muller, 2016). In addition, apps that belong to brands have emerged as instruments that go beyond their commercial potential to provide content, empower the consumer, and contribute to the brand's digital presence (Mondal and Chakrabarti, 2019). In this regard, branded content is not so much a format, but instead is a communication strategy applicable to a wide range of formats (Rogel-Del-Hoyo and Marcos-Molano, 2020).

Branded content takes many forms, but audio-visual is the most sophisticated, the most widely used, and the most popular (Bezbaruah and Trivedi, 2020), in addition to offering with the greatest potential for brands (Carvajal and Barinagarrementeria, 2019) because of its attraction for users. Beyond the form, however, the experiential option that enables interaction with the content is important as well. Waqas, Hamzah and Mohd-Salleh (2021) have developed a typology of branded content according to the interpretation that consumers make of their experience when interacting with such content:

1. Social bonding experience: This can be observed when users who have interacted with the same branded content generate a social bond (Davis, Piven and Breazeale, 2014), as well as a sense of belonging to a community of individuals who have connected with the same branded content.

2. Self-identity experience: This occurs when consumers are able to identify with the content, thanks to the coherence between branded content and the beliefs and social roles of users.

3. Utilitarian experience: This arises when users detect practicality in branded content when it includes information about the products or services or their consumption (Davis, Piven and Breazeale, 2014).

4. Humorous experience: This occurs with entertaining content that requires cultural interpretations, which also improves consumer engagement, thereby fostering an emotional bond with the brand (Arroyo-Almaraz and Díaz-Molina, 2021).

5. Aesthetic experience: This appears with content that resorts to specific expressive forms, such as musical productions that rely on the "symbolic value of music" as an "aesthetic manifestation that inspires emotion" (Sánchez-Olmos, 2018: 316).

6. Awe-inspiring experience: This takes place when the user experiences an amazing or wonderful feeling backed by symbolic meanings that underlie the content with which they interact, which is also related to their personal and social circumstances.

7. Discerning experience: This occurs when the user must make a cognitive effort to interpret and understand branded content.

2.3. The link between creativity and branded content

Creativity is an essential parameter in creating memorable branded content. This is logical if we bear in mind that the creativity of any product "has a positive impact on generating a memory" (García-García, Llorente-Barroso and García-Guardia, 2021: 454). Highly creative branded content achieves greater engagement from the target audience in its dissemination (Horrigan, 2009; Lee and Hong, 2016; Lou and Koh, 2018; Silva-Barreto, Freitas and Freitas-De-Paula, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to design creative strategies to close the gap between what the brand wants to say and what its consumers need to hear (Ashley and Tuten, 2015).

Traditionally, creative strategies have been tied to the purpose of the message and the reasoning behind it and have been classified to differentiate them between emotional (transformational) and functional (informational or rational). However, beyond this dichotomy, they can be addressed according to the suitability of the content to factors valued by the consumer, such as their aspirations regarding the brand (image messages), the knowledge or experiences they have about the brand (resonance or experiential messages), or their feelings (emotional messages) (Ashley and Tuten, 2015).

The elements that guide the creative strategy, which are identified as variables of analysis (Baños-González, García-García and Ramírez-Pedriguero, 2009; Hernández-Martínez, 1999) are as follows:

1. The communicative objectives pursued by the brand in relation to the target audience on a cognitive, affective, or behavioural level.

2. The promise offered by the message. It must be in line with the brand's personality in order to reinforce its image; it might refer to a differentiating advantage of the product or a benefit for the consumer.

3. The argumentation underpinning the proposal –this can be rational or emotional. When rational, it allows for a justification according to the reason why (rational explanation of the proposal), or by the weight of evidence (proof that backs the promise). When emotional, it relies on rhetorical mechanisms that enhance the content and lure the target audience (Llorente-Barroso, 2013).

4. The communicative tone that gives personality to the message through the use of certain creative formats.

An essential element in 21st century creative strategies is the concept known as insight. From a communicative point of view, insights are truths, subjective experiences, needs, expectations, motivations, frustrations, fears, illusions, and desires, which are relevant and revealing for the target audience, and reinforce a link between the brand and the consumer from a personal perspective (Casabayó and Martín, 2010; Castelló-Martínez, 2018; Roberts, 2005). If a brand's message is supported by good insight, it achieves more recognition, relevance, and veracity for the consumer (Roberts, 2005). Quiñones (2013) developed a taxonomy of insight in which he made a differentiation (Castelló-Martínez, 2018) among:

1. Emotional: These seek to move consumers with stories that touch their hearts.

2. Symbolic: These insights foster a deep yet not necessarily logical relationship between consumer and product (or brand), sometimes linked to weaknesses, fears, and aspirations.

3. Cultural: These draw on an experience linked to a specific consumption context; they relate to social behaviours, behavioural routines, beliefs, socio-cultural codes, and values.

The promise of creative strategy must respond to insight and be expressed through a creative concept, which is defined as the original, effective, and powerful expression of that promise (Castelló-Martínez, 2018; Hernández-Martínez, 1999). Joannis (1990; 1996) identified two types of creative concepts (Baños-González, García-García and Ramírez-Pedriguero, 2009; Hernández-Martínez, 1999):

1. Direct: These clearly express the promise. They are also explicit and declarative. Yet they limit audience participation in the communicative process, promote similar messages according to the category, make recall-by-differentiation difficult, and sometimes exaggerate the promise, making it only slightly credible.

2. Indirect: These suggest the promise, allowing greater involvement of the target audience and providing differentiation in the brand's communicative style. However, as they are interpretative, they can possibly cause the message to be misunderstood. Within this category, a distinction is made

between induced or inferred concepts (these convey the promise linked to the insight as a logical consequence), and connoted concepts (these express the promise by allowing a feeling to flourish among the audience).

Creative pieces play a decisive role in transforming a concept into a specific production. They are defined as flexible structures that make it possible to give certain expression to an idea and to organise the content of the message (Hernández-Martínez, 1999). More dynamic creative formats lead to greater consumer participation in brand discourse (Silva-Barreto, Freitas and Freitas-De-Paula, 2020).

The most successful creative approaches are affective branded content strategies (Abbott, Holland, Giacomin and Shackleton, 2009), which offer emotional and empathetic messages capable of conveying sustainable values (Sciarrino and Prudente, 2020).

Content related to corporate identity and channelled through emotion and humour is associated with high levels of engagement and fosters long-term brand building, while content focused on promotions stimulates immediate contacts that build the brand in the short term (Lee, Hosanagar and Nair, 2018). The success of the emotional bond that this content achieves in the digital environment is often based on the use of humour, nostalgia, and a positive tone (Arroyo-Almaraz and Díaz-Molina, 2021; Martín-Quevedo, Fernández-Gómez and Segado-Boj, 2019).

The commitment to emotion in branded content has led to a type of storytelling that seeks to empathise with the public through stories narrated by brands (Castelló-Martínez, 2018). In this regard, of all branded content strategies, audio-visual fiction has become the most prominent (Muller, 2016), as it conveys stories that engage, captivate and transport audiences to alternate realities (Moore, 2012). These stories are memorised and recalled, providing an extraordinary affective connection with the target audience (Castelló-Martínez, 2018; Kaufman, 2003; Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus and Van-Riel, 2013). In audio-visual fiction, audiences are able to see the brand's message through the story –they are forms of advertising under the guise of a cultural good, intended to be consumed and shared by the receiver (Carrascoza, 2020).

Brands have also capitalised on the storytelling features of social networks such as Instagram for developing visual stories capable of generating a transfer of meaning and an emotional response in the consumer (Lim and Childs, 2020). Nowadays, even the most informative branded content formats do not ignore this emotional nuance. Thus, the so-called docu-advertising offers a narrative with "rhetoric disguised in apparently journalistic style, but with a clear persuasive intention due to the prevalence of its emotional content" (Panarese and Suárez-Villegas, 2018: 75).

3. Methodology

In order to answer the research questions, an analysis of the creative qualities of a sample of branded content that stands out for its creativity is herein proposed. The sample consists of the 23 pieces of branded content awarded a grand prize (GP) and/or a gold award at the annual "El Sol" Festival between 2015 and 2021 (Table 1).

Table 1: Sample of analysis

Year	ID	Piece	Advertiser	Agency	Award
2015	BC1	Los últimos deseos de la Kombi	Volkswagen Kombi, Brasil	Almap BBDO	GP
2015	BC2	Embarazados	Kimberly Clark Huggies, Argentina	Ogilvy & Mathers	Gold
2016	BC3	Consumo responsable (nivel 7) (Santiago Segura)	Gas Natural Fenosa, España	Arena Media	GP
2016	BC4	Animal copyrights	WWF/Latinstock, España	Cheil Spain	Gold
2016	BC5	Football memories FM	Líbero, España	Lola Mullenlowe	Gold
2016	BC6	La escuela de decoración	Ikea, España	Ymedia España	Gold

Year	ID	Piece	Advertiser	Agency	Award
2016	BC7	Windows upgrade the world	Microsoft Windows 10, España	VCCP Spain	Gold; gold
2017	BC8	La muñeca que eligió conducir	Audi España, España	Proximity Barcelona	GP; gold
2017	BC9	Alerta de spoiler	Netflix Narcos, Estados Unidos	Alma DDB	Gold
2017	BC10	Cuánto. Más allá del dinero	Banco Santander. Cuenta 1|2|3, España	MRM/McCann	Gold
2017	BC11	Give extra, get extra	Extra Gum, Estados Unidos	Energy BBDO	Gold
2017	BC12	Lecciones de español	Netflix Narcos, Estados Unidos	Alma DDB	Gold
2017	BC13	Receta agua	Oxfam Intermón, España	Tiempo BBDO	Gold
2018	BC14	Por siempre jamás	Audi España, España	Proximity Barcelona	GP
2018	BC15	Who?	FOX Networks Group, Argentina	Ponce	Gold
2019	BC16	El tiempo que nos queda	Pernod Ricard Ruavieja, España	Leo Burnett	GP; gold
2019	BC17	Caso #iloveyouhater	Coca-Cola Sprite, Argentina	Santo Buenos Aires	Gold
2019	BC18	Ikea vs. Arkano	Ikea, España	Inteligencia Ymedia	Gold
2019	BC19	Moby Dick sin límites	Fnac, España	DDB España	Gold
2019	BC20	Museo del Romanticismo	Ikea, España	McCann	Gold
2019	BC21	Uplifted Alex	Coca-Cola, Argentina	Mercado McCann	Gold
2021	BC22	El clásico de la historia	Corona, Estados Unidos	We Believers	GP
2021	BC23	Unboxing Ibai	Netflix and PlayStation (PS5), España	FCB & FiRe	Gold

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the "El Sol" Festival (2021)

The period of 2015-2021 was chosen for the sample mainly for the following two reasons:

1. Firstly, the selection of the previous five years is a sufficient timeframe to verify the evolution and trends in a sector as variable as advertising, according to previous research (Sánchez-Cobarro, 2018; Tauro, Panniello and Pellegrino, 2021). Thus, by selecting the last six annual events, this timeframe guarantees greater certainty, making the results more reliable.

2. Secondly, the other reason is the inauguration in 2014 of the "branded content" section as a category to be awarded at the "El Sol" Festival (2014), and consequently, it was already a more mature, established section in 2015.

In order to analyse the pieces in the sample, a creative analysis model has been designed based on several of the contributions collected in the theoretical framework (Table 2).

This matrix will be systematically applied to the analysis of each sample unit to find consistencies and discrepancies among the creative qualities that characterise each of the selected branded content pieces.

Table 2: Analytical register model

Analysis item	Description	Possibilities
Objetive	What the brand intends to achieve with the message with regard to the target audience	Cognitive (to think about something)
		Affective (feeling something)
		Behavioural (doing something)
Insight	Truth, experience, need, motivation, frustration, and fear, to which the brand responds with the promise	Emotional
		Symbolic
		Cultural
Promise	Brand proposal in the message to connect with the insight	Competitive advantage
		Consumer benefits
Arguments	Arguments to justify the proposal or allure the target audience	Rational (with justification)
		Emotional
Concept	Powerful, original, and effective statement of promise	Direct (denoted)
		Indirect (inferred or connoted)
Format	Expressing the idea according to one or more creative formulas	Narration
		Humour
		Other
Tone	Communicative style that gives character to the message and facilitates brand distinctiveness.	Formal
		Informal

Source: Prepared by the authors based on previous theories

The analysis of each of these categories of study has involved reflection on specific defining aspects of the formal and/or conceptual qualities of each piece. Thus, analysis of the communicative objectives of the items have allowed us to establish whether the type of message they convey is informative, educational, or entertaining (Aguado-Guadalupe, 2008; Arroyo-Almaraz and Baños-González, 2018; Bezbaruah and Trivedi, 2020; De-Aguilera-Moyano, Baños-González and Ramírez-Perdiguero, 2015). Furthermore, in this category, the specific type of information it gathers (quality, up-to-date, complete, accessible, convenient, relevant) or entertainment (enjoyable, entertaining, rewarding, gratifying, amusing, or exciting) will be stated (Bezbaruah and Trivedi, 2020). In conjunction with the type of message influenced by the objectives, the study will focus on whether the content includes any attraction, whether functional (information about the usefulness or use of the product or service), emotional (affective aspects or social causes), or experiential (an invitation to experience the content through the senses) (Ashley and Tuten, 2015).

Analysis of the promise will be linked to that of the insight of each branded content piece in the sample, in order to determine whether it is based on emotional, symbolic, or cultural aspects (Castelló-Martínez, 2018; Quiñones, 2013). The study of argumentation will examine whether it includes rational elements and/or affective aspects that incentivise an emotion or an action on the part of the consumer (consume, interact, share, participate, disseminate, explore, create) (Ashley and Tuten, 2015).

The study of creative concepts will focus on their correlation with one or more of the categories devised by Joannis (1990; 1996), according to the way (direct or indirect) in which the promise is expressed in the content. Meanwhile, the tone will be examined in relation to formats, as the use of certain creative formulas allows us to delineate a specific communicative style. Thus, humour is usually associated with

a positive, informal tone (Arroyo-Almaraz and Díaz-Molina, 2021; Martín-Quevedo, Fernández-Gómez and Segado-Boj, 2019) and storytelling provides a tone that is close to the target audience (Sánchez-Cobarro, 2018).

With this approach, the results of this study will offer an approach to the creative characteristics of high-quality branded content, allowing the extrapolation of a benchmark model in order to understand the success of these strategies and their evolution or stability.

4. Results: Analysis of the creative attributes of branded content

The results of the creative analysis of the sample have been classified into two main groups to provide an orderly response to the research questions.

4.1. Communicative objectives and features of the branded content message (RQ1 and RQ2)

As shown in Table 3, the branded content analysed in this study stands out for mostly pursuing an affective objective in order to empathise with the target audience. However, this objective is often supported by the following factors:

1. Cognitive aspects, by including in the message informative elements about the products, the brand, or the content itself.

2. Behavioural objectives, by incorporating activators in the message that motivate the user to consume the product or service, or to become involved in a cause associated with the branded content.

Content that prioritises cognitive and functional objectives usually gives greater value to relevant, quality information about the brand (its products and services) or about the consumer (Table 3).

An example of this are the three Ikea proposals under study: in BC6, the brand launches a decorating school to educate consumers who are interested in interior design; in BC18, Ikea challenges Arkano to reveal the names of the products in its catalogue and their characteristics; in BC20, users are invited to experience the Museum of Romanticism, in which they are asked to identify the Ikea furniture incorporated into its 18th century decoration.

As for the type of message, messages related to entertainment stand out (present in all the content analysed, except in BC13, BC16-BC17). These show differences in relation to research focused on consumer perception, which highlights the effectiveness of informative content (Bezbaruah and Trivedi, 2020; Kulkarni, Kalro and Sharma, 2020; Lou and Yuan, 2019). Such entertainment takes the form of hybrid content that can be classified as enjoyable, exciting, rewarding and/or fun. However, pure entertainment is not a widespread option (BC10-BC11, BC21-BC23), but is often combined with content with informative overtones (BC1, BC9, BC15), educational (BC2, BC5, BC12), or a combination of both (BC3, BC20) for the purpose of enhancing the functionality, the content, or the affective power of the brand. It is important to highlight that much of the entertainment content analysed includes a social cause linked to the brands' corporate social responsibility policies (CSR). One example can be found in BC3, in which the ironic short film directed by Santiago Segura that Gas Natural intends to use in order to change consumer behaviour toward responsible energy consumption; or BC5, where Líbero is involved in the fight against Alzheimer's disease by creating a radio programme of football memories to help victims and their families to mitigate the effects of such a devastating disease.

Other branded content strategies have a focus on educational content that is entertaining (BC8, BC14, BC19), or supported by information (BC13, BC16-BC17). Thus, BC8 and BC14 are two content items related to Audi that are a kind of animated, audio-visual fiction with a social commitment, as they aim to educate children about gender diversity. Meanwhile, in BC17, Sprite encourages young audiences to reflect on cyberbullying, inviting victims to fight it with love. Other content is related to social issues by the very essence of the advertiser. This is the case with BC13, in which Oxfam Intermón offers pertinent, relevant information in order to raise public awareness about the need to make drinking water accessible in certain countries.

On occasion, the branded content combines educational and informative messages underpinned with entertainment, which allows the message to be conveyed more easily (BC4, BC6-BC7). In fewer cases, it launches an informative message supported by entertainment with educational features. One example is BC18, in which Arkano accepts Ikea's challenge in exchange for the company's commitment to furnish a socio-educational centre.

Table 3: Objectives and types of messages in the sample analysed

ID	Objective	Type of message	Specific content	Attraction
BC1	Affective	Entertainment; informative overtone	Enjoyable, entertaining, thrilling	Emotional; experiential support
BC2	Affective	Entertainment; educational overtones	Rewarding, thrilling	Experiential; emotional support
BC3	Behavioural; affective and cognitive support	Entertainment; educational, informative overtones	Quality, relevant information. Entertaining, enjoyable	Functional; emotional support
BC4	Cognitive; affective support, behavioural purpose	Educational and informative; entertainment overtones	Quality, relevant, accessible information	Functional; emotional, experiential support
BC5	Affective; behavioural purpose	Entertainment; educational overtones	Pleasant, rewarding, thrilling	Emotional; functional, experiential support
BC6	Cognitive; behavioural purpose	Educational and informative; entertainment overtones	Relevant, quality information. Enjoyable, entertaining, rewarding.	Functional; emotional, experiential support
BC7	Cognitive; affective support	Educational and informative; entertainment overtones	Relevant, quality information. Enjoyable, entertaining	Functional; experiential support
BC8	Affective; cognitive support	Educational; entertainment overtones	Relevant, quality information. Enjoyable, entertaining	Emotional; functional, experiential support
BC9	Affective; cognitive support	Entertainment; informative overtones	Relevant information. Entertaining, thrilling	Experiential; emotional support
BC10	Affective; behavioural purpose	Entertainment	Enjoyable, entertaining	Emotional; experiential support
BC11	Affective	Entertainment	Thrilling, enjoyable, entertaining	Emotional; experiential support
BC12	Affective; cognitive support	Entertainment; educational overtones	Entertaining, enjoyable, educational	Functional; emotional, experiential support
BC13	Cognitive; behavioural purpose, affective support	Entertainment; informative overtones	Timely, relevant, quality information	Functional; emotional support
BC14	Affective; cognitive support	Educational; entertainment overtones	Relevant, quality information. Enjoyable, entertaining	Emotional; functional, experiential support

ID	Objective	Type of message	Specific content	Attraction
BC15	Affective; behavioural purpose, cognitive support	Entertainment; informative overtones	Entertaining, enjoyable, thrilling. Quality information	Emotional; functional support
BC16	Affective; behavioural purpose, cognitive support	Educational; informative overtones	Timely, relevant, quality information. Thrilling	Emotional; functional, experiential support
BC17	Affective; behavioural purpose	Educational; informative overtones	Timely, relevant, quality information. Thrilling	Emotional; functional, experiential support
BC18	Cognitive; affective support	Informative; educational overtones, entertainment	Complete, up-to-date information. Entertaining, pleasant, enjoyable	Functional; emotional support
BC19	Affective; cognitive support	Educational; entertainment overtones	Entertaining, enjoyable. Complete, relevant information	Experiential; emotional support
BC20	Cognitive; behavioural purpose	Entertainment; educational, informative overtones	Entertaining, fun, enjoyable. Up to date, convenient information	Experiential; functional support
BC21	Affective	Entertainment	Entertaining, enjoyable, thrilling	Experiential; emotional support
BC22	Affective	Entertainment	Entertaining, enjoyable, thrilling	Emotional; experiential support
BC23	Affective	Entertainment	Entertaining, enjoyable, thrilling	Experiential; emotional support

Source: Prepared by the authors

Moreover, in Table 3 the attraction of the message is identified, which is connected to the argumentation that strategically supports the promise (Table 4). Emotional attraction is the factor that appears most often in the branded content items analysed, which receives priority status in BC1, BC5, BC8, BC10-BC11, BC14-BC17 and BC22. This finding is consistent with previous research that has determined the efficacy of affective content (Abbott et al., 2009; Arroyo-Almaraz and Díaz-Molina, 2021; Sciarrino and Prudente, 2020; Lee, Hosanagar and Nair, 2018; Llorente-Barroso, García-Guardia and Kolotouchkina, 2020). To a large extent, this emotional attraction is linked to an experience (BC1, BC5, BC8, BC10-BC11, BC14, BC16-BC17, BC22), which the user enjoys either firsthand, or symbolically through the character who lives through it in the content. At other times, experiential attraction stands out, which is based on emotion (BC2, BC9, BC19, BC21, BC23). Except in BC12, functional attraction tend to be prioritised in association with content that identifies cognitive and behavioural aspects in their objectives, some of which are related to social causes (BC3-BC4, BC13, BC18), and others to the brand's products (BC6-BC7, BC18). This functional attraction may incorporate aspects that are emotional (BC3, BC13, BC18), experiential (BC7), or a combination of both (BC4, BC6, BC12).

4.2. Strategic creative attributes of successful branded content (RQ3 and RQ4)

Table 4 summarises the creative attributes that characterise the content strategies analysed. The type of insight most frequently identified is cultural (present in 20 items), which clarifies the considerations of Quiñones (2013) regarding the greater use of emotional insight in brand communication. However, cultural insights are often underpinned by aspects that are emotional (BC3-BC4, BC13, BC18-BC22), symbolic (BC7, BC12), or a combination of both (BC8, BC14).

The insight that was second in line in appearing more often in the branded content analysed was that of emotion, which allows the use of stories that move the target audience to nurture their affective relationship with the brand.

Emotional insights appear predominantly with the support of cultural aspects (BC1, BC9-BC11, BC16-BC17) and, to a lesser extent, backed by symbolic features (BC2, BC5).

Occasionally, symbolic insights act as a reference with emotional (BC15), cultural (BC6), or hybrid (BC23) nuances. The profound, yet not necessarily logical relationship that provides these symbolic insights (Castelló-Martínez, 2018; Quiñones, 2013) facilitates the personalisation of the content when the target audience is very specific. As examples of symbolic insight, it is worth mentioning a short film by Fox, in BC15, which tries to connect with fans of The Walking Dead TV series and allure sceptical TV series fans to give this genre an opportunity; or BC23, another audio-visual fiction item produced live, starring one of the biggest influencers in the gaming world (Ibai Llanos) with the aim of launching PS5 and promoting Netflix among his followers.

The promises of the content analysed mostly relate to consumer benefits (20 items, Table 4). The few competitive advantages identified (BC4, BC18, BC20), which are associated with some benefit, appear in branded content strategies with behavioural and/or cognitive objectives (Table 3), along with storylines that combine rational justification with emotional resources (Table 4). One example is BC4, which calls for compensation for animal authorship rights, as they are making available to the public the best possible perspective on nature (evidence for support), gathered by those who relate to it best.

The most prominent arguments are purely emotional (BC1-BC2, BC5-BC11, BC14-BC15, BC17, BC19, BC21-BC23), seeking to connect with the target audience. The content with argumentation that is hybrid, and which includes a justification by giving a reason why (BC3, BC12, BC18), or evidence for support (BC4, BC13, BC16, BC20), also stand out for their affectivity.

Such justifications serve highly emotional content, which stands out for the meaning they offer and the emotional reaction they induce. Thus, in BC16, Ruavieja presents an application based on an algorithm capable of calculating how much time someone has left to enjoy being with a friend; the emotional impact masks the rational proof. Most content usually incorporates a more or less subtle or explicit invitation, which encourages the public to share the content, access other actions related to the strategy, and/or to connect with the brand's own media. This call for interactivity precisely seeks to reinforce this affective brand-target connection.

Table 4: Strategic creative attributes in the sample analysed

ID	Insight	Promise	Argument	Tone	Concept	Format
BC1	Emotional; cultural support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; explicit invitation	Friendly, informal	Connoted	Presence, analogy, storytelling
BC2	Emotional; symbolic support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; implicit invitation	Friendly, empathetic	Connoted	Analogy, storytelling
BC3	Cultural; emotional support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; reason why; implicit invitation	Informal, entertaining, wild	Connoted; direct overtone	Storytelling, humour, celebrities
BC4	Cultural; emotional support	Competitive advantage	Evidence for support; emotional; implicit invitation	Formal, serious	Direct; connoted overtone	Demonstration, analogy, fragments of life
BC5	Emotional; symbolic support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; explicit invitation	Serious formal,	Connoted; induced	Solution, fragments of life
BC6	Symbolic; cultural support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; without invitation	Serious, formal, enjoyable	Induced; connoted overtone	Solution, fragments of life
BC7	Cultural; symbolic support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; without invitation	Serious, formal, dramatic	Induced;	Storytelling, analogy, solution

ID	Insight	Promise	Argument	Tone	Concept	Format
BC8	Cultural; symbolic, emotional support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; explicit invitation	Childish, entertaining, enjoyable	Induced; connoted overtone	Analogy, animation, storytelling, presence
BC9	Emotional; cultural support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; subtle encouragement	Daring, irreverent	Induced; connoted overtone	Storytelling, analogy, antithesis, celebrity, suspense
BC10	Emotional; cultural support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; subtle encouragement	Friendly, enjoyable	Connoted	Storytelling, analogy, antithesis, celebrity, cinema
BC11	Emotional; cultural support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; subtle encouragement	Friendly, romantic	Connoted	Storytelling, fragments of life, analogy
BC12	Cultural; symbolic support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; reason why; explicit invitation	Friendly, informal, entertaining	Direct; connoted overtone	Humour, fragments of life, celebrity, analogy
BC13	Cultural; emotional support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; evidence for support; explicit invitation	Serious, realistic, tough	Direct; connoted overtone	Fragments of life, demonstration, solution
BC14	Cultural; symbolic, emotional support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; explicit invitation	Childish, entertaining, enjoyable	Induced; connoted overtone	Storytelling, animation, analogy, presence
BC15	Symbolic; emotional support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; subtle encouragement	Serious, entertaining	Induced; connoted overtone	Storytelling, cinema, celebrity, suspense, humour
BC16	Emotional; cultural support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; evidence for support; explicit invitation	Serious, formal, realistic	Connoted; direct overtone	Solution, fragments of life, analogy, demonstration
BC17	Emotional; cultural support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; without invitation	Serious, realistic, tough	Induced; connoted	Solution, fragments of life, demonstration, analogy, antithesis
BC18	Cultural; emotional support	Competitive advantage	Emotional; reason why; explicit invitation	Informal, friendly, entertaining	Induced; connoted	Celebrity, solution, storytelling
BC19	Cultural; emotional support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; without invitation	Friendly, enjoyable	Induced; connoted	Storytelling, analogy, solution
BC20	Cultural; emotional support	Competitive advantage	Emotional; evidence for support; explicit invitation	Informal, friendly, daring	Induced; connoted	Storytelling, solution, analogy

ID	Insight	Promise	Argument	Tone	Concept	Format
BC21	Cultural; emotional support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; without invitation	Informal, friendly, entertaining	Induced; connoted	Animation, analogy, video game
BC22	Cultural; emotional support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; subtle encouragement	Informal, down-to-earth, entertaining	Induced; connoted	Storytelling, fragments of life, celebrities, analogy
BC23	Symbolic; emotional, cultural support	Consumer benefit	Emotional; without invitation	Casual, entertaining, risky	Induced; connoted	Storytelling, suspense, humour, celebrity

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The expression of promise is based on essentially indirect creative concepts, which tend to combine a succession of clues to infer the promise (induced) with its association to a feeling of the target audience (connoted). When direct concepts are identified, this is carried out with content fragments combined with connoted concepts (BC3-BC4, BC12-BC13, and BC16). This type of content uses mixed arguments in which a type of rational justification can be found. One example is BC12, Netflix's proposal for fans of its bilingual series *Narcos* to encourage them to learn Spanish; in a very straightforward way, the brand offers them free Spanish lessons starring the actors of the series, thereby proving the functionality of both its product and the content.

The category of the content labelled tone (Table 4) varies according to the type of message and the objective pursued (Table 3). In general, informal, and consumer-friendly styles are used, which resort to codes of allurement frequently supported by rhetorical instruments and formats that enhance the emotional connection between brand and user. This is the reason for the success of storytelling (BC1-BC3, BC7-BC11, BC14-BC15, BC18-BC20, BC22-BC23), which creates a tone that is close to the audience (Sánchez-Cobarro, 2018), and of analogy (BC1-BC2, BC4, BC7-BC12, BC14, BC16-BC17, BC19-BC22), which facilitates instruments of identification and empathy. The storytelling most extensively developed is that of audio-visual fiction (BC1, BC3, BC8, BC10, BC14-BC15, BC23), literary content (BC19), historical re-enactments (BC7, BC22), and proposals linked to art (BC18, BC20). The presence of celebrities is also a highly recurrent format in the branded content analysed (BC3, BC9-BC10, BC12, BC15, BC18, BC22-BC23), probably because it provides some emotional satisfaction to the audience (Choi, 2015), although the quality of the content in these cases is more valued (Bezbaruah and Trivedi, 2020). While humour is a way of connecting with the audience by facilitating a positive, informal tone (Arroyo-Almaraz and Díaz-Molina, 2021; Martín-Quevedo, Fernández-Gómez and Segado-Boj, 2019), it is not the most widely used aspect in the sample studied, but when it appears, it allows us to identify an entertaining tone (BC3, BC12, BC15, BC23), which is sometimes crazy or risky (BC3, BC23).

5. Discussion and conclusions

The results of this research allow us to establish that the creative attributes of successful branded content have remained nearly unchanged in recent years. Consequently, this allows us to propose a model that defines the most characteristic creative pattern in this type of strategy. The design of the model is based on a summary that provides answers to the diverse research questions that have guided this work, which are the following:

1. The communicative objectives that guide this content are connected to the affective component of the attitude, as they aim to move the audience emotionally to empathise with them. However, in nearly half the cases (BC5, BC8-BC10, BC12, BC14-BC17, BC19), this affective goal has a behavioural purpose and/or cognitive support.

2. The most commonly used type of branded content is entertainment, often combined with informative and/or educational (awareness-raising) overtones. This type of content usually has a primarily emotional attraction, sometimes underpinned by experiential and/or functional aspects.

3. None of the pieces focuses on purely emotional, cultural or symbolic insights. The preferred insights are cultural and emotional, although when the content is aimed at a very specific audience, a deep and personal connection with the brand that offers a symbolic insight is often prioritised. These insights usually formulate promises in the form of consumer benefits supported by emotional arguments capable of overshadowing any complementary rational justification. The tone of this type of content is widely diverse and depends on the objectives of the message, but it usually seeks closeness and empathy with

the audience, often using narrative formats (storytelling), analogies, celebrities, and humour to a lesser extent.

4. The preferred concepts for conveying promises are those that are indirect and connotative, which suggest the promise by trying to bring out a feeling in the audience. These concepts usually support the expression of the promise with clues that allow for its deduction (indirect inferred concepts). Direct concepts are rare. When they appear, they do so at specific points in the content, clarifying aspects of the message, but without breaking the magic of indirect concepts in order to involve the target audience in understanding the message.

Figure 1 represents visually the benchmark creative model of branded content, which includes the attributes that have characterised these items and have remained stable in the last six annual editions of the "El Sol" Festival.

Figure 1. Creative pattern of successful branded content
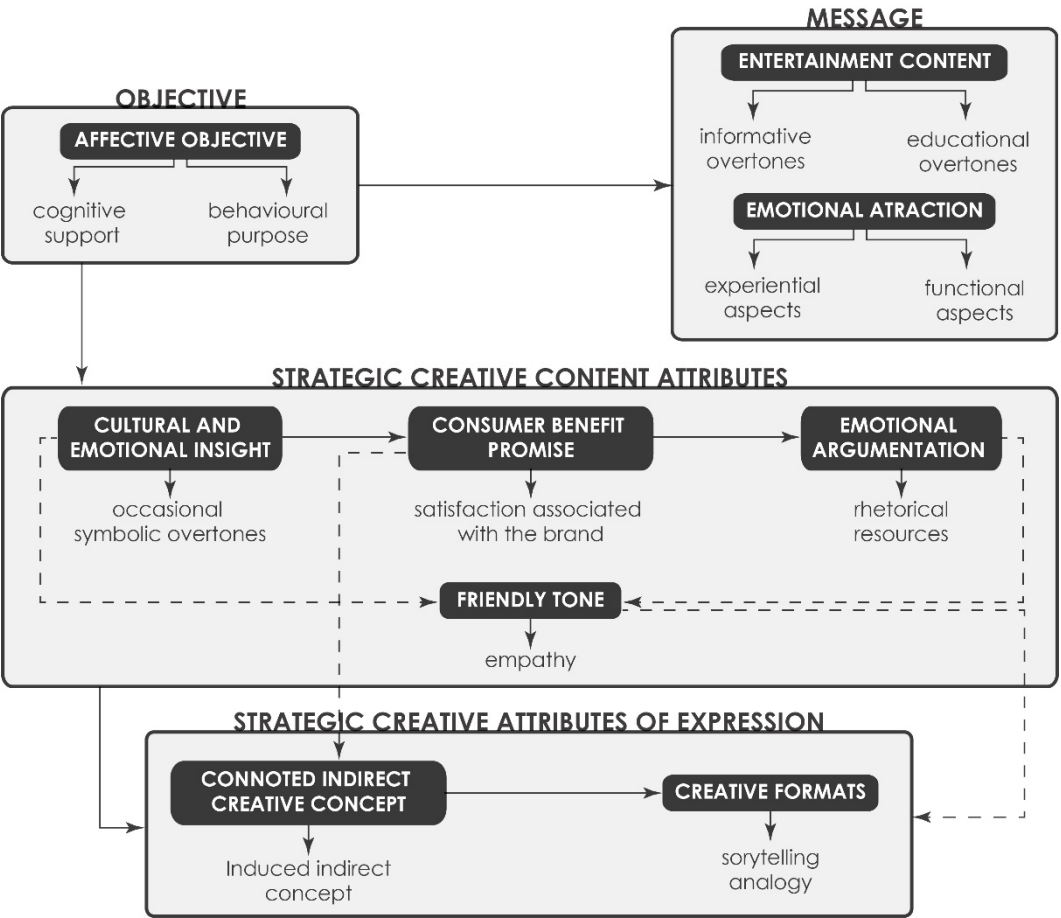
Source: Prepared by the authors

The results of this study indicate that creative branded content strategies offer entertainment content with a primarily emotional attraction, together with experiential and/or functional overtones. This finding is in stark contrast both to the strategies of many brands on social networks, which are committed to a greater use of functional content despite the experiential and participatory nature of social media (Ashley and Tuten, 2015), as well as to the preferences of some audiences (generation Z), whose attitude toward brands is more influenced by high quality informative content (Bezbaruah and Trivedi, 2020).

The meticulous content of many of the proposals analysed confirms the growing concern for quality in film-style branded content, which includes the participation of renowned actors and directors from the film industry in its production (Muller, 2016). Specifically, the detail involved in the development of this type of content, along with its complexity, are the factors that are driving the advertising sector to

demand hybrid, creative professionals with skills and knowledge that are constantly being updated (Llorente-Barroso, Viñarás-Abad and Marugán-Solís, 2021).

In general, the quality of branded content has a positive impact on its effectiveness (Sciarrino and Prudente, 2020), although the true success of such content lies in its ability to generate an emotional connection with the audience (Abbot et al, 2009; Arroyo-Almaraz and Díaz-Molina, 2021; Formoso-Barro, Sanjuán-Pérez and Martínez-Costa, 2016; Lee, Hosanagar and Nair, 2018; Martín-Quevedo, Fernández-Gómez and Segado-Boj, 2019; Sciarrino and Prudente, 2020; Panarese and Suárez-Villegas, 2018). Branded content reinforces emotional solidarity and the brand-consumer relationship, offering the consumer pleasurable, emotional satisfaction when interacting with such content (Choi, 2015). To achieve this bond, content must respond to the strong demand for interactivity and a high level of creativity (Llorente-Barroso, García-Guardia and Kolotouchkina, 2020) which, as this work has proven, relies on narrative formats and rhetorical resources (Llorente-Barroso, 2013) such as analogy, in order to gain empathy with the audience.

Even though this research contributes to a better understanding of branded content, offering a conceptual model that defines its most notable creative qualities, it has some limitations that must be acknowledged. For example, this paper does not address deontological questions about branded content or native advertising (Atal, 2018; Daun and Schäfer, 2020), nor does it analyse user involvement in the generation of content linked to the construction of memetic brands (Caliandro and Anselmi, 2021), nor the creation of narratives from brand-user interaction (Waqas, Hamzah and Mohd-Salleh, 2021), all of which occur in a process of constant redefinition of those brands in a context of open collaboration (Verwey, 2015).

6. Specific contributions

Contributions	Persons in charge
Conception of the work and design	Carmen Llorente-Barroso, Ivone Ferreira and Cristóbal Fernández-Muñoz.
Documentary research	Carmen Llorente-Barroso and Ivone Ferreira.
Data collection	Carmen Llorente-Barroso, Ivone Ferreira and Cristóbal Fernández-Muñoz.
Analysis and critical interpretation of the data	Carmen Llorente-Barroso, Ivone Ferreira and Cristóbal Fernández-Muñoz.
Review and approval of the versions	Carmen Llorente-Barroso, Ivone Ferreira and Cristóbal Fernández-Muñoz.

7. Acknowledgement

8. References

[1] Abbott, M.; Holland, R.; Giacomin, J. & Shackleton, J. (2009). Changing affective content in brand and product attributes. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 18*(1), 17-26. https://doi.org/bxtkw2

[2] Aguado-Guadalupe, G. (2008). Branded content más allá del product placement en la televisión digital: Advertainment y licensing. *Enlaces*, 8. https://bit.ly/3zh6SOR

[3] Aribarg, A. & Schwartz, E. M. (2020). Native advertising in *online* news: Trade-offs among clicks, brand recognition, and website trustworthiness. *Journal of Marketing Research, 57*(1), 20-34. https://doi.org/ghrjmj

[4] Arroyo-Almaraz, I. & Baños-González, M. (2018). Los contenidos publicitarios como generadores de experiencias en los públicos. En F. García-García; V. Tur-Viñes; I. Arroyo-Almaraz & L. Rodrigo-Martín (Coords.), *Creatividad en publicidad. Del impacto al comparto* (pp. 233-261). Madrid: Dykinson.

[5] Arroyo-Almaraz, I. & Díaz-Molina, R. (2021). The meme phenome-non in the creative strategy of Netflix Spain on Twitter. *Icono14, 19*(2), 312-337. https://doi.org/gsjm

[6] Ashley, C. & Tuten, T. (2015). Creative strategies in social media marketing: An exploratory study of branded social content and consumer engagement. *Psychology and Marketing, 32*(1), 15-27. https://doi.org/gc3knm

[7] Atal, M. R. (2018). The cultural and economic power of advertisers in the business press. *Journalism, 19*(8), 1078-1095. https://doi.org/gd49t5

[8] Baños-González, M.; García-García, F. & Ramírez-Perdiguero, F. J. (2009). *Las palabras en publicidad: El redactor publicitario y su papel en la comunicación publicitaria*. Madrid: Laberinto.

[9] Bezbaruah, S. & Trivedi, J. (2020). Branded content: A bridge building gen z's consumer-brand relationship. *Vision, 24*(3), 300-309. https://doi.org/gsjn

[10] Caliandro, A. & Anselmi, G. (2021). Affordances-based brand relations: An inquire on memetic brands on Instagram. *Social Media + Society, 7*(2), 1-18. https://doi.org/gsjp

[11] Carrascoza, J. A. (2020). Lágrimas na chuva: A publicidade no futuro e o futuro da publicidade. *Galáxia*, 45, 207-222. https://doi.org/gsp2

[12] Carvajal, M. & Barinagarrementeria, I. (2019). Contenido de marca en diarios españoles: Concepto, organización y retos de los periodistas implicados. *Trípodos,* 44, 137-152. https://doi.org/gsjq

[13] Casabayó, M. & Martín, B. (2010). *Fuzzy marketing. Cómo comprender al consumidor camaleónico*. Barcelona: Deusto.

[14] Castelló-Martínez, A. (2018). La dimensión creativa del concepto de insight aplicado a la publicidad. Empatizando con el target de la comunicación persuasiva. En F. García-García; V. Tur-Viñes; I. Arroyo- Almaraz & L. Rodrigo-Martín (Coords.), *Creatividad en publicidad. Del impacto al comparto* (pp. 83-114). Madrid: Dykinson.

[15] Choi, M. W. (2015). A study on the *branded content* as marketing communication media in the viewpoint of relational perspective. *Indian Journal of Science and Technology, 8*(S5), 116-123 https://doi.org/gsjr

[16] Daun, W. & Schäfer, S. (2020). Pandora's box? The promise and peril of branded content partnerships. *Journal of Brand Strategy, 9*(1), 27-37. https://bit.ly/3mBqiun

[17] Davis, R.; Piven, I. & Breazeale, M. (2014). Conceptualizing the brand in social media community: The five sources model. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 21*(4), 468-481. https://doi.org/gsjs

[18] De-Aguilera-Moyano, J.; Baños-González, M. & Ramírez-Perdiguero, J. (2015). Branded entertainment: Entertainment content as marketing communication tool. A study of its current situation in Spain. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social, 70*(1057), 519-538. https://doi.org/gnfv

[19] De-Aguilera-Moyano, J.; Baños-González, M. & Ramírez-Perdiguero, J. (2016). Hybrid messages in postmodern marketing: A taxonomical proposal. *Icono14, 14*(1), 26-57. https://doi.org/dzs6

[20] De-Assis-Furtado, J. (2014). Publicidad y branded entertainment: Interactividad y otros códigos de entretenimiento. *AdComunica,* 7, 87-106. http://doi.org/10/dk7c

[21] Festival "El Sol" (20/02/2014). El Sol da a conocer novedades y presidentes de jurado para su 29ª Edición. *Festival "El Sol"*. https://bit.ly/3bA3m7Z

[22] Festival "El Sol" (2021). Palmarés histórico. *Festival "El Sol"*. https://bit.ly/3q1FHG5

[23] Formoso-Barro, M.; Sanjuán-Pérez, A. & Martínez-Costa, S. (2016). Branded content versus product placement: Visibilidad, recuerdo y percepción del consumidor. *Pensar la Publicidad,* 10, 13-25. https://doi.org/gnfw

[24] García-García, F.; Llorente-Barroso, C. & García-Guardia, M. L. (2021). Interrelaciones de la memoria con la creatividad y la imagen en la conformación de la cultura. *Arte, Individuo y Sociedad, 33*(4), 1095-1116. https://doi.org/g4m8

[25] Hardy, J.; Macrury, I. & Powell, H. (2018). *The advertising handbook*. London: Routledge.

[26] Hernández-Martínez, C. (1999). *Manual de creatividad publicitaria*. Madrid: Síntesis.

[27] Horrigan, D. (2009). *Branded content*: A new model for driving Tourism via film and branding strategies. *Tourismos, 4*(3), 51-65. https://bit.ly/3gxlJfl

[28] Joannis, H. (1990). *El proceso de creación publicitario. Planteamiento, concepción y realización de los mensajes*. Bilbao: Deusto.

[29] Joannis, H. (1996). *La creación publicitaria desde la estrategia de marketing*. Bilbao: Deusto.

[30] Kaufman, B. (2003). Stories that sell, stories that tell. *Journal of Business Strategy, 24*(2), 11-15. https://doi.org/c5b939

[31] Kulkarni, K. K.; Kalro, A. D. & Sharma, D. (2020). The interaction effect of ad appeal and need for cognition on consumers' intentions to share viral advertisements. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 19*(4), 327-338. https://doi.org/ggkfct

[32] Kulkarni, K. K.; Kalro, A. D.; Sharma, D. & Sharma, P. (2020). A typology of viral ad sharers using sentiment analysis. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 53*, 101739. https://doi.org/gsjv

[33] Lee, J. & Hong, I. B. (2016). Predicting positive user responses to social media advertising: The roles of emotional appeal, informativeness, and creativity. *International Journal of Information Management, 36*(3), 360-373. https://doi.org/drdm

[34] Lee, D.; Hosanagar, K. & Nair, H. S. (2018). Advertising content and consumer engagement on social media: Evidence from Facebook. *Management Science, 64*(11), 5105-5131. https://doi.org/gc3km8

[35] Lehu, J. (2007). *Branded entertainment: Product placement and brand strategy in the entertainment business*. London: Kogan Page.

[36] Lim, H. & Childs, M. (2020). Visual storytelling on Instagram: Branded photo narrative and the role of telepresence. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, 14*(1), 33-50. https://doi.org/gsjx

[37] Llorente-Barroso, C. (2013). Tippexperience: El ornato como fuente creativa para la construcción de formatos publicitarios innovadores en YouTube. *Icono14, 11*(1), 71-98. https://doi.org/gsjz

[38] Llorente-Barroso, C.; García-Guardia, M. L. & Kolotouchkina, O. (2020). El impacto de las redes sociales en la estrategia de las marcas: Creatividad, engagement y eWOM. En S. Liberal-Ormaechea & L. Mañas-Viniegra (Coords.), *Las redes sociales como herramienta de comunicación persuasiva* (pp. 35-53). Madrid: McGraw-Hill.

[39] Llorente-Barroso, C.; Viñarás-Abad, M. & Marugán-Solís, F. (2021). Essential skills in current creative advertising: University vs. professional reality. *Icono14, 19*(2), 93-117. https://doi.org/gsj2

[40] Lou, L. & Koh, J. (2018). Social media advertising effectiveness: A conceptual framework and empirical validation. *Asia Pacific Journal of Information Systems, 28*(3), 183-203. https://doi.org/gsj3

[41] Lou, C. & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of *branded content* on social media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 19*(1), 58-73. https://doi.org/ggn9pw

[42] Lundqvist, A.; Liljander, V.; Gummerus, J. & Van-Riel, A. (2013). The impact of storytelling on the consumer brand experience: The case of a firm-originated story. *Journal of Brand Management, 20*(4), 283-297. https://doi.org/gnfz

[43] Martín-Quevedo, J.; Fernández-Gómez, E. & Segado-Boj, F. (2019). How to engage with younger users on Instagram: A comparative analysis of HBO and Netflix in the Spanish and US markets. *International Journal on Media Management, 21*(2), 67-87. https://doi.org/g4rj

[44] Mayrhofer, M.; Jörg, M.; Einwiller, S. & Naderer, B. (2020). User generated content presenting brands on social media increases young adults' purchase intention. *International Journal of Advertising, 39*(1), 166-186. https://doi.org/gj9zf3

[45] Mondal, J. & Chakrabarti, S. (2019). Emerging phenomena of the branded app: A systematic literature review, strategies, and future research directions. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 19*(2), 148-167. https://doi.org/gsj4

[46] Moore, S. G. (2012). Some things are better left unsaid: How word of mouth influences the storyteller. *Journal of Consumer Research, 38*(6), 1140-1154. http://doi.org/10/gnf3

[47] Moran, G.; Muzellec, L. & Johnson, D. (2020). Message content features and social media engagement: Evidence from the media industry. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 29*(5), 533-545. https://doi.org/gsj5

[48] Muller, K. (2016). El papel de las marcas en la nueva era de la comunicación publicitaria. *Opción, 32*(12), 39-65. https://bit.ly/2UMTByB

[49] Panarese, P. &y Suárez-Villegas, J. C. (2018). Docupublicidad. La función del pathos en el storytelling del documental publicitario. *Anàlisi. Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura, 58*, 63-76. https://doi.org/gsj6

[50] Quiñones, C. (2013). *Desnudando la mente del consumidor. Consumer insights en el marketing*. Lima: Planeta.

[51] Reimer, T. & Benkenstein, M. (2018). Not just for the recommender: How eWOM incentives influence the recommendation audience. *Journal of Business Research, 86*, 11-21. https://doi.org/ghksg3

[52] Roberts, K. (2005). *Lovemarks. El futuro más allá de las marcas*. Barcelona: Urano.

[53] Rogel-Del-Hoyo, C. & Marcos-Molano, M. (2020). El *branded content* como estrategia (no) publicitaria. *Pensar la publicidad, 14*(1), 65-75. https://doi.org/gsj7

[54] Sabate, F.; Berbegal-Mirabent, J.; Cañabate, A. & Lebherz, P. R. (2014). Factors influencing popularity of branded content in Facebook fan pages. *European Management Journal, 32*(6), 1001-1011. https://doi.org/gsj8

[55] Sánchez-Cobarro, P. H. (2018). Branded content y entertainment: Un impulso para las organizaciones. *Revista de Comunicación de la SEECI, 45*, 43-54. https://doi.org/gskb

[56] Sánchez-Olmos, C. (2018). Formatos y sectores en el *branded content* musical: Videoclip y moda, pop stars de la musicidad. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación, 9*(2), 305-319. https://doi.org/gskc

[57] Sciarrino J. & Prudente J. (2020). To market, to market: How creative treatments of in-store branded content impact sales. *Journal of Brand Strategy, 9*(1), 75-90.

[58] Segarra-Saavedra, J. e Hidalgo-Marí, T. (2018). Viralidad e interacción. Análisis del engagement de los diez anuncios más vistos en YouTube en España en 2016. *Icono14, 16*(1), 47-71. https://doi.org/gskd

[59] Silva-Barreto, L.; Freitas, V. & Freitas-De-Paula, V. A. (2020). *Branded content* and consumer engagement on Facebook: An analysis of omnichannel retail. *Brazilian Journal of Marketing, 19*(3), 540-559. https://doi.org/gskf

[60] Tauro, D.; Panniello, U. & Pellegrino, R. (2021). Risk management in digital advertising: An analysis from the advertisers' media management perspective. *International Journal on Media Management*, 1-29. https://doi.org/g4m7

[61] Van-Loon B. (2019). The agile content marketing roadmap: Integrating strategy and execution. *Journal of Brand Strategy, 8*(2), 167-178. https://bit.ly/3kqXQbU

[62] Verwey, S. (2015). Self-expression and collaborative pro-sumption in the digital brandscape. *Communicatio, 41*(3), 320-320. https://doi.org/gskg

[63] Von-Rimscha, M. B. (2015). Branding media content: From *storytelling* to distribution. En G. Siegert; K. Förster; S. Chan-Olmsted & M. Ots (Eds.), *Handbook of media branding* (pp. 157-167). Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/gskh

[64] Waqas, M.; Hamzah, Z. L. & Mohd-Salleh, N. A. (2021). Customer experience with the *branded content*: A social media perspective. *Online Information Review, 45*(5), 964-982. https://doi.org/gskj

[65] Yakob, F. (2015). *Paid attention: Innovative advertising for a digital world*. London: Kogan Page.

[66] Zamith, F.; Mañas-Viniegra L. & Núñez-Gómez P. (2021). Cognitive perception of native advertising in the Spanish and Portuguese digital press. *Digital Journalism*, 1-19. https://doi.org/gj8ffv

Dr. Marina RAMOS-SERRANO
Universidad de Sevilla. Spain. mramos@us.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6871-9239

Gema MACIÁS-MUÑOZ
Universidad de Sevilla. Spain. gemamaciasm@gmail.com. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2906-6540

Antonio RUEDA-TREVIÑO
Universidad Pablo Olavide. Spain. aruetre@cic.upo.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4992-2703

Branded content and luxury fashion: analysis of audio-visual content on YouTube (2008-2019)

Branded content y moda de lujo: análisis de los contenidos audiovisuales en YouTube (2008-2019)

Abstract

Social networks and the democratisation of fashion have had an impact on the communication strategies deployed by the luxury sector. This article performs a descriptive analysis by way of a content analysis of all the videos hosted —4079— on the YouTube channels of the 12 main luxury fashion brands. The aim is to comprehend the evolution of the audio-visual content of the main luxury fashion brands on YouTube and to identify the main formats. The results provide a classification of the main formats used by the luxury sector, as well as their capacity for interaction. The research concludes that luxury fashion brands deploy more conventional formats than content strategies associated with branded content. Similarly, it can be seen that luxury fashion brands interact with their target audience only marginally.

Resumen

Las redes sociales y la democratización de la moda han impactado en las estrategias comunicativas del sector del lujo. Este artículo realiza un análisis descriptivo a través del análisis de contenido de todos los vídeos alojados —4079— en los canales de YouTube de las 12 principales marcas de moda de lujo. El principal objetivo es conocer la evolución de los contenidos audiovisuales de las principales marcas de moda de lujo en YouTube e identificar los principales formatos. Los resultados aportan una clasificación de los principales formatos utilizados por el sector del lujo, así como su capacidad de interacción. La investigación concluye que las marcas de moda de lujo usan más formatos convencionales que estrategias de contenido asociadas al branded content. Del mismo modo, se aprecia que las marcas de moda de lujo apenas interaccionan con su público objetivo.

Keywords
Branded content; Luxury fashion; YouTube; engagement; content analysis

Palabras clave
Branded content; moda de lujo; YouTube; engagement; análisis de contenido

1. Introduction

The luxury fashion sector has undergone a profound renewal in the last 15 years as a result of globalisation and technological transformation. Structural changes have coincided with other more social and cultural changes, such as the democratisation of fashion due to the success of low-cost brands and the birth of the consumer-stylist role (Tungate, 2005). This sector has also had to adapt to a new, younger and more dispersed public, which already accounts for 38% of luxury shopping sales (Phillips, 2020).

In this changing context, social media is considered to be the innovation that has impacted luxury fashion brands the most (Duong and Sung, 2021; Godey, Manthiou, Pederzoli, Rokka, Aiello, Donvito and Singh, 2016; Kim and Ko, 2010). With 3.23 billion users in 2020 worldwide (Von Abrams, 2020), social networks have become a key tool in any marketing and communication strategy, especially after the pandemic (Mason, Narcum and Mason, 2021). Among the most used social networks is YouTube, which has reached 2 billion users in 2021 and is the most used platform for consuming audiovisual content (Timelight Networks, 2020). Social media users consume almost 8 hours of online video per week and their main motivation is entertainment (Timelight Networks, 2020). In addition, YouTube has become one of the key social networks to connect with the younger generation (Duffett, 2020)and over a billion hours of YT videos are viewed every day, particularly among young consumers. YT has become a massive marketing communication platform, which serves as a medium to target the lucrative Generation Z cohort (first born in the late 1990s.

However, both the specialised press (Anjelic, 2019; Blank, 2020) and the academic literature (Okonkwo, 2010; Kapferer, 2014) agree that luxury fashion brands have been reluctant to embrace social media. The main reason is that digital transformation is a challenge for contemporary luxury, as it involves the combination of two antithetical concepts: 'communication implies contact' and 'luxury implies distance' (Sicard, 2007: 25). In other words, the special characteristics of products in the luxury sector demand a different approach at the communicative level (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). Hennigs, Wiedmann and Klamann (2012) agree that the open and democratic nature of the internet moves away from the exclusivity of luxury brands, but they finally conclude that the digital transformation benefits the sector, and warn about the negative consequences of falling behind. Similarly, Kapferer (2014) recognises that the internet and social media offer the opportunity to create commercial synergies between online and offline, but, most importantly, to create branded content that effectively communicates its values.

1.2. Digital communication of luxury fashion brands

Historically, the dissemination of fashion and its communication, as well as access to this content, has remained subject to the power of the large traditional media —such as specialised magazines or television—, which were moderating institutions for the dissemination of their images. However, the internet and the users who create content have put an end to this domination. The luxury fashion industry has been forced to engage a new generation of consumers who are characterised by their use of digital media. For instance, fashion bloggers and social media influencers have changed the communicative ecosystem of the fashion industry due to their prescriptive nature (Ramos-Serrano and Jiménez-Marín, 2014). There is no doubt that the mass media continue to be a fast and prestigious method of making a brand visible (Díaz-Soloaga, 2014: 104-105); however, this change has also benefited brands by increasing their independence from these traditional media, as fashion companies have ceased to depend exclusively on them and have gained access to their own communication channels to disseminate their content, becoming communicative institutions themselves. According to Rees-Roberts (2020: 407), "contemporary brands no longer require the editorial filter of legacy media to communicate with consumers". Rocamora (2016) even states that social networks are changing the very business of fashion from production to communication. Collections are now conceived to be seen on social media, and fashion shows and other key communication tools of the sector are designed to be consumed on the internet. In this sense, YouTube is considered a key tool for communication in the luxury sector as it can host a wide range of audiovisual content, the main objective of which is to connect with users (Hanke, 2015).

But, on the other hand, the reasons for following luxury fashion brands on social media differ from other sectors where discounts and social interaction are important. In contrast, in the luxury sector, Bazi, Filieri and Gordon (2020) have observed that the relevance of the content posted, entertainment, and aesthetics, among others, are determining factors for consumers to follow their favourite brands.

1.3. Branded content and luxury fashion

Branded content can be defined as any original content, regardless of its format, created by the brand with a strategic intention (Castelló-Martínez and Del Pino-Romero, 2018). Thus, branded content can be informative or entertaining, where audiovisual formats stand out. Moreover, it is a consolidated communication trend, which has had a specific category at the Cannes International Festival of Creativity since 2012 (Sánchez Cobarro, 2018).

Independence from specialised media has allowed fashion brands to be active agents in the generation of entertainment content where videos are the main feature (Kim and Ko, 2010; Rees-Roberts, 2020) with admirable aesthetic value and innovative yet traditional business management. The brands constantly struggle to secure profits by providing novel value to customers through quality products and services, customer management, retail strategies, and innovative marketing mixes. However, the recent entry of numerous fashion brands in the luxury market coupled with decreased sales related to economic downturns have led to new challenges for luxury firms. Because the luxury fashion business is considered high value-added with guaranteed high profit margins and secure regular customers, the lower sectors have begun to heat up the competition. To survive the recent unforeseen challenges of heated competition, they have turned toward marketing communication using social media. Social media are the two-way communication platforms that allow users to interact with each other online to share information and opinions. Use of social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook has already expanded to almost every luxury fashion brand and been evaluated as business takeoff tools. With the increased use of social media as a means of marketing communication for luxury brands, it has become necessary to empirically analyze the effect of social media marketing (SMM. The work of Kim and Ko (2010), pioneers in the study of luxury fashion brands and social media, detected that entertainment was one of the key factors in improving the relationship with consumers. For this reason, the luxury fashion industry began to innovate its content with the creation of fashion films (Ramos-Serrano and Pineda, 2009; Del Pino Romero and Castelló Martínez, 2015; Díaz-Soloaga and Guerrero, 2016) .

The term 'fashion film' refers to a type of audiovisual productions that has its own characteristics. One of the most updated and complete definitions is the one offered by the authors Del Pino-Romero and Castelló-Martínez:

> Fashion films can be defined as audiovisual productions in the form of short films, in the service of a brand, characterised by a communicative style in which the beauty and extremely careful aesthetics of the message —inherited from fashion photography— predominate over the product and/or the brand itself (2015: 118).

There is general agreement on the importance that the internet has had in the development and progress of fashion films as their main channel of dissemination (Ramos and Pineda, 2009: 733), as well as in its intention to entertain in order to attract the audience through a non-intrusive and participatory experience.

However, the impact of social media has diversified the content created by fashion brands. In this sense, Rees-Roberts (2020) states that fashion films are moving towards new narratives and visual styles as a consequence of the influence of social networks such as Instagram or TikTok, but also because of the new formats used by influencers, such as tutorials or hauls. In general, it can be said that social media have accelerated the pace of content creation, and the sector is now forced to update its channels on a daily basis. Campaigns are now extended in time, and content is fragmented into small pieces to get the attention of influencers (Segarra-Saavedra and Hidalgo-Marí, 2018), who have become a key part of communication in the luxury sector. However, the reality is that the industry has integrated them into the system and involves them in the distribution of its content, pretending that they have some control over it (Rees-Robert, 2020: 412).

Heine and Berghaus (2014) report that most fashion brands use social media in a traditional way. Nevertheless, they highlight the importance of using brand storytelling and integrating digital channels into their overall marketing strategy. The work of Pérez-Curiel and Sanz-Marcos (2019) also demonstrates the unidirectional use of Gucci's communication strategy on Instagram. The content posted was mostly focused on the brand's products and advertising campaigns. Besides, the brand's lack of interest in engaging in dialogue with followers was confirmed, which demonstrates "the potential of the company in its role as an influencer, without the need for the decisive presence of external agents to control the communication, marketing and sales processes" (Pérez-Curiel and Sanz-Marcos, 2019: 18).

Despite the fact that audiovisual content is a strategic element for the communication of fashion brands (Ng, 2014)making it the world's second largest luxury goods market. Many luxury fashion brands, such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Chanel and Coach, are making huge digital marketing efforts in China to increase brand equity and sales. This paper uses Coach as an example to explore how luxury brands use social media to connect with middle-class customers in China. After briefly summarizing the development of social media platforms in China, the key components of Coach's social media marketing strategy are highlighted and analyzed. Then a discussion of Weibo users' responses to Coach's posts is presented. The lessons learned from this study will help luxury brand marketers to engage in social media with Chinese users and improve their social media strategy in China.","author":[{"dropping-particle":"","family":"Ng ","given":"Mark","non-dropping-particle":"","parse-names":false,"suffix":""}],"container-title":"Journal of Global Fashion Marketing","id":"ITEM-1","issue":"3","issued":{"date-parts":[["2014"]]},"page":"251-265","title":"Social media and luxury fashion brands in China: the case of Coach Social media and

luxury fashion brands in China: the case of Coach","type":"article-journal","volume":"5"},"uris":["http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=83cf18be-6697-394c-af17-5de9eb4c55c0"]}],"mendeley":{"formattedCitation":"(Ng, 2014, we have found few studies that analyse the content of these brands on YouTube. Along these lines, Hanke (2015: 76) states in her study that luxury brands such as Chanel, Burberry or Dior are using YouTube effectively to attract their target audience and reinforce their brand identity by means of entertainment. She identifies and analyses three categories of content on their YouTube channels: musical performances, historical narratives, and behind-the-scenes footage. In the first category, she highlights the Burberry Acoustic series, which has been showcasing British acoustic artists since 2013 and as of April 2020 has 91 videos and more than 3 million views on its YouTube playlist, making it by far the most viewed on its channel. As an example of historical narrative, Chanel is the most paradigmatic case with its Inside Chanel series, made up of a set of short films that tell different aspects of the history of the company and its founder, Gabrielle Chanel. On the other hand, behind-the-scenes content is one of the most frequent categories on luxury fashion brands' YouTube channels. They usually show the details of how advertising campaigns, fashion shows or the design of collections were made; they may also include making-of scenes or interviews.

Another more recent study, carried out in the professional field, has analysed the presence of 10 luxury brands on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram (Aliferis, 2017). The results reveal that the brands analysed post an average of 6 times per week on Facebook and Instagram, while on YouTube they only post once a month. The most used types of videos are advertising spots, behind-the-brand videos and events or fashion shows. The study questions whether brands are missing a communication opportunity via YouTube, as the video platform has more views than Facebook. However, this is not reflected in the number of channel subscribers. Finally, it recommends luxury brands to create more audiovisual content and be more consistent in their YouTube posts.

1.4. YouTube and its communicative power

The evolution of this online video platform has been linked to the emergence and subsequent professionalisation of youtubers. However, since its acquisition by Google (2006), YouTube has focused its business model on advertising and, in this way, monetising the activity of its users (De Aguilera-Moyano, Castro-Higueras and Pérez-Rufí, 2018). This more commercial approach of the platform has prioritised the channel over the individual video (Vonderau, 2016) and, therefore, the professional youtuber over the amateur.

But, in addition to the advertising possibilities of this platform, brands can create their own channels where they could experiment in the creation of audiovisual content. Although YouTube's characteristics are ideal for creating a professional branded content strategy (Castelló-Martínez, Del Pino-Romero and Tur-Viñes, 2016), the reality is that brands tend to use the platform to post commercial content and even television spots (Costa-Sánchez and Túñez-López, 2019: 234). Castelló-Martínez and Barrilero-Carpio (2021) have shown that the most viewed videos on the channels of the main Spanish advertisers are TV commercials, which are uploaded to the platform to advertise in digital media. Similarly, it was found that the second most used format is informational branded content, and that most companies do not have a planned content strategy. On the contrary, Wang and Chan-Olmsted (2020) found that a good use of the platform is indisputably related to a commitment on the part of the brand, which means having a specialised team with sufficient financial resources to design specific content according to its kind of product. In addition, the frequency of posts is also related to a professional content strategy (Ashley and Tuten, 2015)which creative strategies/appeals are being used, and how these channels and strategies relate to consumer engagement in branded social media. Past research has suggested that brands should focus on maintaining a social presence across social channels with content that is fresh and frequent and includes incentives for consumer participation (Ling et al., 2004, which is in line with the study by Khan and Vong (2014), who showed that users are always looking for fresh content.

2. Research objectives and methodology

Research on branded content used by luxury fashion brands has focused on the use of fashion films as the predominant audiovisual format. However, changes in the luxury industry and the rise of social media require a more detailed analysis of content strategies in this sector. For this reason, the general objective of this research is to find out what kind of audiovisual content is uploaded by the main luxury fashion brands on YouTube and their ability to interact. Based on this general objective, the following research questions are proposed (RQ):

RQ$_1$. How has the use of YouTube by luxury fashion brands evolved?

RQ$_2$. Which audiovisual formats do luxury fashion brands use on YouTube?

RQ$_3$. Which audiovisual formats generate the most viewers?

RQ$_4$. Which audiovisual formats generate the most interaction?

RQ$_5$. Which audiovisual formats generate the most engagement?

RQ$_6$. What kind of content strategies do brands use, conventional or branded content?

In order to answer the research questions, a quantitative methodology has been followed, applying the technique of content analysis to the videos uploaded on YouTube channels from their creation until December 2019 of a representative set of 12 luxury fashion brands. For the selection of these brands, we have considered several rankings (García, 2018; Carrión, 2019; Deloitte, 2019) with the aim of obtaining a group of companies that stand out not only for their financial value but also for other more qualitative aspects, such as brand value or their digitalisation. Table 1 shows the selected brands, the year of creation of their channel and the number of videos analysed —4079 in total—. Data collection and coding was carried out during the period from 6 June 2020 to 16 January 2021, using a content analysis form designed ad hoc based on Ramos-Serrano and Herrero-Diz (2016), Hanke (2015) and Aliferis (2017). It should be noted that all videos uploaded in the selected period were analysed. This data will allow us to establish a timeline of the strategic use that each of the brands has made of their YouTube channel.

Table 1: Brands analysed, year of creation of the channel and number of videos

Brand	Year of creation	Number of videos
Michael Kors	2008	413
Gucci	2008	368
Burberry	2009	389
Fendi	2009	206
Tory Burch	2009	281
Chanel	2010	766
Christian Dior	2010	573
Louis Vuitton	2010	147
Prada	2010	370
Salvatore Ferragamo	2010	347
Hermes	2015	126
Yves Saint Laurent	2016	93
Total		4079

Source: own elaboration based on YouTube

Thus, the analysis form is divided into two sections. On the one hand, there is a technical form where the following data is collected: (1) date of posting of the video, (2) brand, (3) length, (4) title of the video, (5) number of views, (6) number of likes, (7) number of dislikes, (8) number of comments.

The number of views provides information on the audience of the video, while the number of likes, dislikes and comments indicate the interaction potential of the videos. Based on this data, the engagement formula proposed by López-Navarrete, Cabrera-Méndez, Díaz Somavilla and Calduch-Losa (2021) has been applied: non-viral interaction (applause + conversation) / impacts (views) * 100.

Secondly, the videos were categorised by format. The formats identified are: (1) advertisement, (2) competition/contest, (3) detail, (4) documentary, (5) editorial, (6) interview, (7) fashion film, (8) fashion show, (9) making of/behind the scenes, (10) news/report, (11) trailer, (12) tutorial, (13) video blog, (14) music video. On this matter, it should be noted that YouTube's own formats, such as videoblog, unboxing, haul, reviews or challenges, have been categorised in a single format called "videoblog" in order to simplify their classification. Only tutorials, a very popular format on this platform, have been counted separately due to its importance.

Once the different formats have been identified, they have been grouped into two distinct categories, namely traditional formats, more related to conventional advertising and the ones commonly used by luxury fashion brands, and on the other hand, branded content formats, which in turn have been subdivided into two subcategories: entertainment branded content and informative branded content. Thus, based on the definition of branded content offered by Castelló-Martínez and Del Pino-Romero (2018), and the classifications made by Castelló-Martínez and Barrilero-Carpio (2021); BCMA Spain (2020); Toledano Cuervas-Mons, Selva-Ruíz and Díaz-Masa Gutiérrez (2021), this grouping of the formats identified in the study is proposed —see Table 2—. As for the traditional formats, we have taken into account not only advertisements but also fashion shows, details and fashion editorial, formats already used regularly by luxury fashion brands, and which they have simply transferred to YouTube. This grouping of the individual formats into larger containers allows us to clarify whether luxury fashion brands use YouTube to share traditional content, or whether they follow a branded content strategy.

Table 2. Proposed classification of formats

Traditional content	Branded content	Types of branded content
Advertisement	360°	Entertainment
Detail	Competition	Entertainment
Fashion show	Documentary	Informative
Editorial	Interview	Informative
	Fashion film	Entertainment
	Making of	Entertainment
	Trailer	Entertainment
	Tutorial	Informative
	Music video	Entertainment
	Video blog	Entertainment
	Report	Informative
	News	Informative

Source: own elaboration based on Castelló-Martínez and Barrilero-Carpio (2021); BCMA Spain (2020); Toledano Cuervas-Mons et al. (2021).

3. Results

3.1. Video production and its evolution over time

The luxury fashion brands analysed have an uneven evolution in their use of YouTube. The first brand to be recorded is Michael Kors, with its first video uploaded on 3 June 2008. However, it was not until 2010 that five of the brands in the sample opened their YouTube channels: Prada, Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Salvatore Ferragamo. The last brand to start its activity on this platform was Yves Saint Laurent (YSL) (17/6/2016). This information is relevant when it comes to observing which has been the period of greatest activity so far, since it is only since 2016 that all the luxury fashion brands in the sample have been active on their respective YouTube channels. In this respect, it can be seen that the increase in the annual average has generally followed an upward trend. As a result, the year with the highest overall activity was 2019, with a significant leap in values from 2016 onwards, a period in which the average value almost doubled.

Graph 1. Total number of videos per year
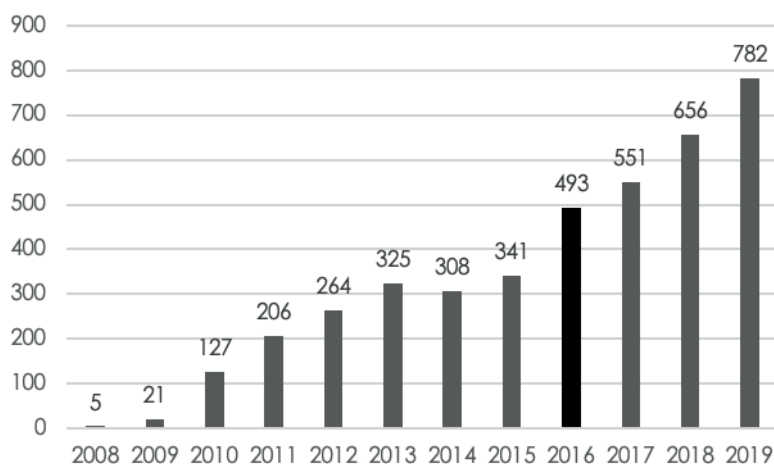
Source: own elaboration

In terms of total video production by brand, Chanel (18.8%), Dior (12.6%) and Michael Kors (9%) are the leading brands. In contrast, the brands with the lowest activity are YSL (2.3%), Hermes (3.1%) and Louis Vuitton (3.2%). In Table 3, we can see the number of videos per brand and their percentage of the total analysed.

Table 3. Number of videos by brand and percentage of the total

Brand	Number of videos	%
BUR	389	9,5%
CHA	766	18%
DIOR	573	14%
FEN	206	5,1%
GUC	368	9%
HER	126	3,1%
LOU	147	3,6%
KOR	413	10,1%
PRA	370	9,07%
SAL	347	8,5%
TOR	281	6,9%
YSL	93	2,3%
Total	4079	

Source: own elaboration

However, individual brand analysis reveals that the use of YouTube has been somewhat up and down, with periods of inactivity or low use combined with periods of higher activity. In fact, Chanel and Fendi are the only two brands that have followed some upward progression in their annual postings. But even these brands have periods of lower activity; for instance, Chanel reduced its video production in 2015 and 2017, and Fendi in 2016. The rest of the brands show a more irregular evolution, with periods of no activity or a very sharp decrease and others of sudden growth. Table 4 shows the years of greatest and least activity of each brand, which helps to understand this very uneven behaviour. As can be seen,

in all cases the year of lowest activity coincides with the year of creation of the channel, in which few videos are usually uploaded. Meanwhile, Prada and Ferragamo differ from the rest of the brands in that they launch their channel with a high number of videos, but they do not continue their activity on a regular basis during the period analysed. As for the period of greatest activity, not all brands coincide. Even so, 2019 is the year in which half of the brands analysed concentrate their activity.

Table 4. Periods of highest and lowest activity

Brand	Year of lowest activity	Year of highest activity
BUR	2009 (1)	2016 (72)
CHA	2010 (5)	2019 (130)
DIOR	2010 (1)	2019 (228)
FEN	2009 (5)	2019 (60)
GUC	2008 (3)	2017 (70)
HER	2015 (9)	2018 (55)
LOU	2010 (1)	2019 (64)
KOR	2008 (2)	2016 (68)
PRA	2010 (35)	2019 (59)
SAL	2010 (19)	2013 (70)
TOR	2009 (5)	2016 (60)
YSL	2016 (9)	2018 (37)

Source: own elaboration

On this matter, very explosive growth has also been observed after certain dates. This is the case of Christian Dior which, despite starting its activity in 2010, like Chanel, has a very sharp growth in 2017, with an increase of 1091% compared to the previous year, 2016, as we can see in Graph 2. However, the case of Ferragamo is the opposite, which has reduced its activity very sharply since 2014, with a drop of 65% in just 5 years.

The results also show that luxury fashion brands use their channels with little planning. For instance, Michael Kors, which started its activity in June 2008, takes more than 6 months to upload the next video. On the other hand, it is common for brands to upload several videos on the same day, but they also combine this with periods of inactivity. However, the differences between brands are very clear. While Chanel posts on average every 4 days, Louis Vuitton takes an average of 23 days. With the exception of Chanel and Dior, the rest of the brands take an average of 10 days to post.

Graph 2. Evolution of the main brands
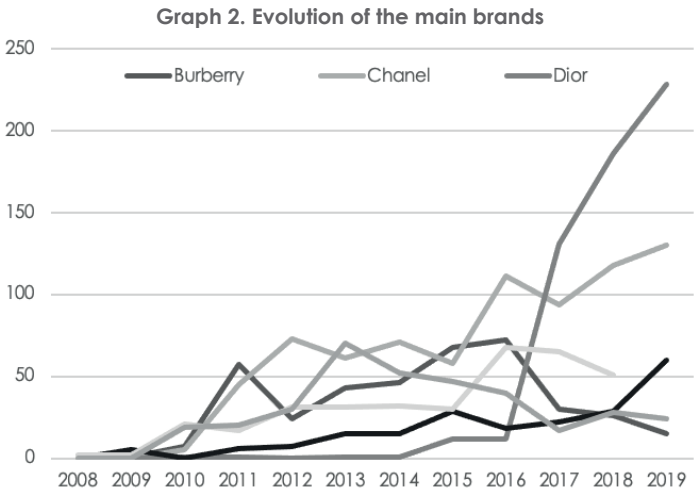
Source: own elaboration

Regarding the number of views, the luxury fashion brands analysed accumulated more than 1.6 billion views. As we can see in Graph 3, the annual evolution is increasing throughout the period analysed, with 2019 being the year with the highest number of views —more than 331 million—. Similarly, it can be seen that this increase is associated with the incorporation of luxury fashion brands on YouTube and with the increase in the number of videos. Therefore, 2010 and 2016 are key years to understand the evolution of the audience of luxury fashion brands on YouTube. When analysed by brand, Chanel, the fashion house with the highest number of videos, is also the one with the highest percentage of views —31.7%—. Louis Vuitton has the second highest number of views —20.3%—, despite being the brand with the third lowest number of videos. Therefore, 2 of the 12 brands analysed obtain more than 50% of the views. In third place is Dior with 14.4% of the views. Surprisingly, Michael Kors, the first brand in the sample to have a YouTube channel and the third in number of videos, only obtains 8.5% of the views. The rest of the brands do not reach 10% of the views.

Graph 3. Evolution of views
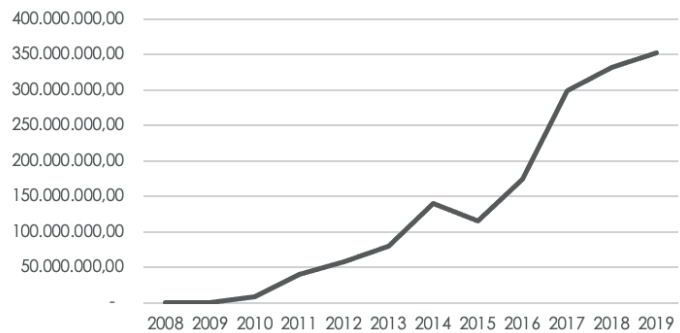
Source: own elaboration

Most of the brands have a very uneven distribution of views, which means that the power to generate an audience for each of the videos is very different. Compared to the rest of the brands, Ferragamo is, despite being one of the brands with the lowest number of views, the one with the most stable audience —see Graph 4—. Dior, on the other hand, has a very high standard deviation, i.e., it has very different audience data with respect to its average number of views.

Graph 4. Study of views
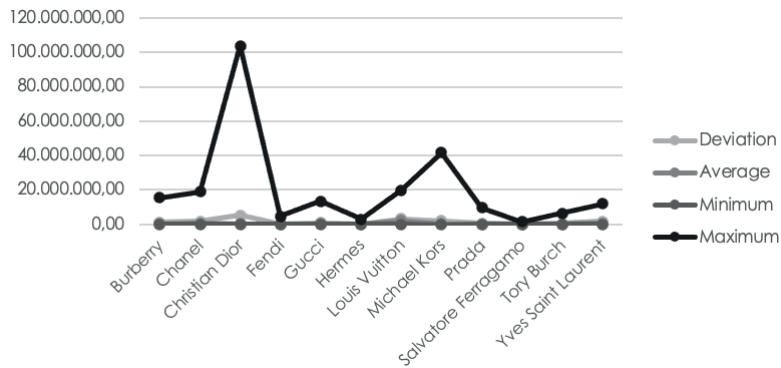
Source: own elaboration

With regard to interactions, it should be noted that YSL has deactivated the interaction options, which is why it was decided to exclude its videos when presenting the results. The 3986 videos of the 11 brands analysed in this section achieved 6,090,246 interactions, an average of 1,527 interactions per video. Of the total number of interactions, 91% —5,552,901— correspond to 'likes', and only 5.6% are 'dislikes' —340,047—. Meanwhile, comments account for only 3.2% of interactions, i.e., 197,298 comments in total. As for the annual evolution of interactions, it can be said that it follows an upward trend, with 56% of interactions occurring in the last three years analysed —2017-2019—. In the analysis by brand, Chanel is the one with the highest number of interactions —more than 2 million—, representing 48% of the total number of interactions. Hermes, on the other hand, is the brand with the fewest interactions, with just 0.19%, or 11,381 interactions.

3.2. Formats: evolution over time

The advertisement is the most used format, representing 41.57% of the total number of videos registered. It is followed, with a notable difference, by the making of (15.4%), the fashion show (11.5%) and the interview (11.3%). From here, the rest of the formats do not have a representation of more than 3.5%, which is achieved by the news. At the bottom of the ranking, the least used formats are editorial (0.12%), trailer (0.32%) and 360° (0.69%). (0,69 %). Fashion films, on the other hand, accounted for only 1.23% of the total, with a total of 50 videos.

With regard to the evolution over time of the formats, it can be seen that as brands join the platform, they experiment with new formats. Thus, in 2008, the first year analysed, only two different formats appeared, advertisement and news, while in 2019, 15 of the 16 formats registered were identified. Advertisements have, in general, a growing trend that is relevant from 2016 onwards, when the data increases by 53%, and this growth is kept until 2019. With other formats, such as the making of and the fashion show, we observe that there is a very pronounced increase during the first years, then a moderate decrease, and a stronger increase from 2016 onwards. Similarly, tutorials and interviews also have a progressive increase from 2016 onwards, and achieve their best results in 2018 and 2019, respectively. Fashion films were particularly popular in 2013 and 2015, years in which 43% of the videos in this format were posted.

On the other hand, there are formats that have experienced irregular ups and downs, but whose use by brands is significant, given their intrinsic potential on YouTube. These include music videos, which experienced its biggest boom between 2013 and 2016, with an average of 21 videos per year, and video blogs, which has seen the highest rate of use in 2017 and 2019, with 18 and 24 videos of this format, respectively.

As for the individual analysis by brand, we observe that the advertisement continues to be the most used format on most occasions (see Table 5). Only three brands stand out from the rest. This is the case of Hermes, where competition is the most used format, with 38.1% of the total number of videos, compared to advertisement, which represents 28.6%. However, it is important to note that the results of the competition format are an exception, as they are only attributed to this fashion house, which uses the video platform to broadcast equestrian competitions. For its part, Dior uses the making of format in 33.3% of cases compared to advertisement (26.9%). In the case of Fendi, making of (27.7%) also narrowly outperforms the advertisement format (27.2%). On the other hand, the brands that use advertisements the most are YSL (86%), Tory Burch (58%) and Salvatore Ferragamo (49.6%).

Table 5. Formats used by each brand

| Format	BUR	CHA	DIOR	FEN	GUC	HER	LOU	MIC	PRA	SAL	TOR	YSL
360°		3	10	2	6		1		6			
Advertisement	150	275	154	56	201	36	64	194	157	172	164	80
Competition						48						
Detail		41	3				1					
Documentary		52	1		4		2	1	6			
Editorial					3			2				
Interview	32	105	136	31	38	13	18	36	7	23	22	
Fashion film		4		2	4				24	10	5	1
Fashion show	30	55	49	36	45	10	46	22	108	38	19	11
Making of	24	132	191	57	46	2	1	47	40	57	35	
News	16	13	10	16	12		3	32	8	29	6	
Report	3	24	12	6	4	11	9	7	3	2	2	
Trailer	1				3				4	5		
Tutorial	32	52	2		2	6	1	31	1	6	18	
Music video	101	5						4	1	3		1
Video blog		5	5				1	37	5	2	10	
Total	389	766	573	206	368	126	147	413	370	347	281	93

Source: own elaboration

When looking at other lesser-used formats by brand, Burberry, for instance, is heavily invested in the music video format, which accounts for 26% of its own content and 88% of the music videos in total, with the aim of reinforcing its origins through the promotion of emerging and established British artists, who participate in the Burberry Acoustic programme with live performances and special collaborations. For its part, Chanel is betting more on the documentary and report formats compared to the other brands, representing 79% and 29% of the respective totals, to underpin both its history and tradition and the iconicity of its founder, Gabrielle Chanel, through series such as Inside CHANEL —produced both in English and French, which seems to be intended to reinforce the Gallic origin— or CHANEL SUBLIMAGE. Chanel is also the driving force behind the detail format, producing 91% of this type of video, which allows the viewers to appreciate product features that are difficult to perceive without touching or observing them up close. Prada, for its part, makes intensive use of fashion shows, which represents 26% of the total of this format, and is also the producer of the greatest number of fashion films —48% of the total of this format—.

On the other hand, special mention should be made of the two formats most closely related to YouTube, namely the tutorial and the video blog. Most of the brands analysed post tutorials, except for Fendi and YSL. The brands that use this format the most are Chanel —34%—, Burberry —21%— and Kors —20.5%—. On the other hand, video blogs are only used by 7 of the 12 brands analysed, and Kors is the brand that makes most use of this new format —57%—.

The format with the highest number of views is the advertisement, which accumulates 65% of them — more than one million views—. The rest of the formats have very limited views. Thus, fashion shows have 13% of the total number of views —209,735,511— and the making of barely gets 5.2%. The formats with the lowest number of views are editorial, detail and competition, which do not reach 0.1%. Meanwhile, fashion films only accumulated 1.5% of views —24,084,645—.

Meanwhile, the formats with the highest number of interactions coincide with the formats with the highest representation: advertisements —30.3%—, making of —18.5%— and fashion shows —18%—. In other words, more than 66% of interactions are concentrated in these three formats. And if we compare the number of videos with the number of interactions, as can be seen in Graph 5, making of and fashion shows are proportionally more effective, as they achieve good results with fewer videos. Interviews, on the other hand, achieve 10.8% of the interactions, a figure that is also very high, mainly due to the number of comments, 12% of the total. The same goes for fashion films, which stand out for their interactions (see Graph 5). After this, the rest of the formats do not exceed 6% of interactions.

Graph 5. Videos by format and their interacting power
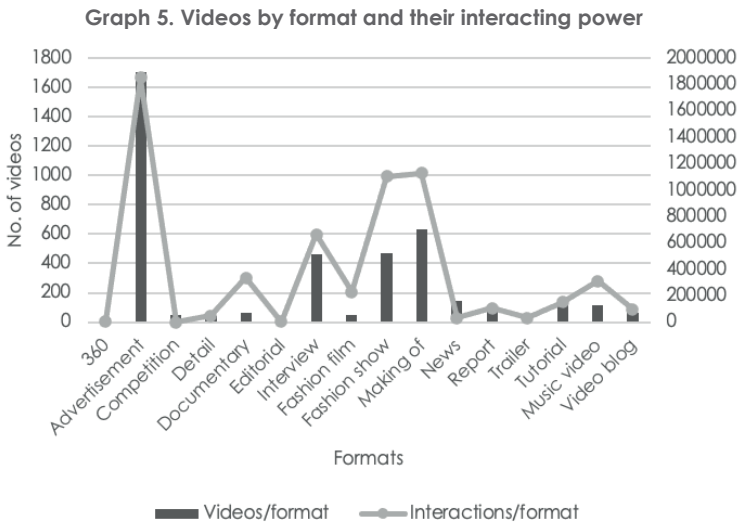
Source: own elaboration

Finally, in terms of engagement rate, the data is very low in general. Most of the formats fail to reach 1%. And the format with the best results is the interview, although it only achieves 2.2%. Meanwhile, the advertisement only reaches 0.17%. In terms of engagement data by brand, the fashion houses with the best global results are Dior —20.3%—, Ferragamo —19.6%— and Chanel —18.4%—. On the other hand, the brands with the lowest engagement are Hermes —0.3%—, Louis Vuitton —1.4%— and Tory Burch —3.2%—. It should be noted that this data corresponds to the total amount achieved in the entire period analysed, and without differentiating by format.

3.3. Branded content and advertising content of luxury fashion brands

The results indicate that 54.4% of the content posted on YouTube by luxury fashion brands is traditional, while 45.5% corresponds to branded content, of which 28.8% is entertainment and 22.6% is informative. As for the evolution over time, both categories of content have shown a regular growth over the period analysed, which is related, as mentioned above, to the increased use of the platform by brands. In general, luxury fashion brands tend to use more traditional content than branded content. However, it is from 2017 when branded content begins to grow more than traditional content, even surpassing it in 2019. In terms of the type of branded content, it can be seen that entertainment content is used more regularly over time, although there is greater use in the period from 2009-2013. Meanwhile, informative branded content began to be used more from 2014 onwards, when it caught up with entertainment content. However, it was in 2017 when luxury fashion brands began to opt for informative content over entertainment content, as can be seen in Graph 6 below.

Graph 6. Evolution over time of traditional content and branded content
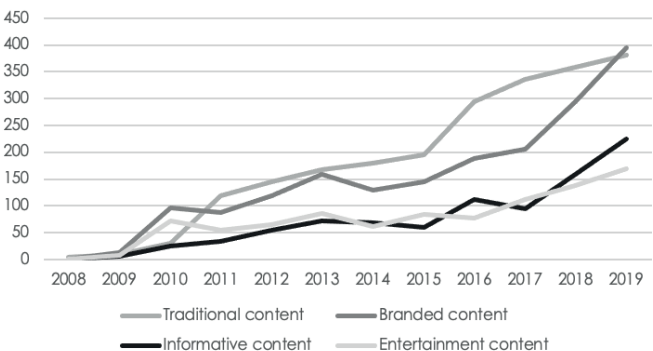
Source: own elaboration

The individual data reveal that each brand has different content strategies. However, 8 of the 12 brands analysed create more traditional content, as can be seen in Table 6, although in some cases the use of traditional formats is considerable, as in the case of YSL, Prada, Tory Burch and Ferragamo. In contrast, Burberry, Chanel, Dior and Fendi use more formats categorised as branded content. In this way, Burberry is generally committed to entertainment branded content, which, as mentioned above, is related to its commitment to music. Dior, on the other hand, is also committed to branded content, with a greater number of entertainment videos. It can be seen that it has also invested heavily in informative branded content, especially interviews. Fendi, for its part, with a closer proportion between the two categories, uses both entertainment and informative branded content. In the case of Chanel, the leading brand in terms of number of videos, it is more strongly committed to informative branded content, due to the use of interviews, documentaries and reports. However, it should be noted that, in the case of Chanel, the difference between traditional content and branded content is minimal.

Table 6. Content strategies by brand

Brand	Traditional	Branded content	Informative	Entertainment
Burberry	180	209	83	126
Chanel	371	392	246	146
Christian Dior	206	357	161	196
Fendi	92	112	53	59
Gucci	249	113	60	53
Hermes	46	80	30	50
Louis Vuitton	111	35	33	2
Michael Kors	215	198	109	89
Prada	265	99	25	74
Salvatore Ferragamo	210	137	60	77
Tory Burch	183	98	48	50
Yves Saint Laurent	91	2	0	2

Source: own elaboration

4. Discussion

As for the evolution over time of luxury fashion brands, the results show that this sector has an irregular behaviour in the use of YouTube. The brands analysed join the platform gradually, which is in line with previous studies that show certain reticence in the use of social media in this sector (Anjelic, 2019; Blank, 2020; Okonkwo, 2010; Kapferer, 2014). As YouTube becomes more established as a platform and a key tool for reaching younger people (Phillips, 2020), the brands studied are using the platform more intensively. In fact, it is only in 2016 that the 12 brands analysed have a presence on YouTube and there is a significant increase in the number of videos uploaded.

However, not all brands have an upward trend in their use of YouTube. The data shows that brands behave in a disorganised way. This is related to the capricious strategies of the sector, closely linked to changes in the creative directions of fashion houses. Thus, it can be seen that, while Ferragamo leaves this social network in 2014, Dior begins an explosive growth in the same year. This behaviour is in the opposite direction to the recommendations for professional use (Ashley and Tuten, 2015).

On the other hand, the low interaction rate of luxury fashion brands demonstrates the difficult relationship established with their audience on social media, as a consequence of the exclusivity that characterises this kind of products (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009), and which is very difficult to fit into communication strategies. For instance, YSL does not allow interactions on its YouTube channel. Although this is an exception, the reality is that the rest of the brands are not characterised by conversation on their channels either. This traditional way of using the platform observed in this study is in line with the reports made by Heine and Berghaus (2014) and Pérez-Curiel and Sanz-Marcos (2019). However, the brand that has the closest relationship with its audience is Chanel, which is also the brand with the highest number of videos uploaded, and which makes the most intensive use of the platform.

The most common format used by most luxury fashion brands is the advertisement. These are the same TV spots that are uploaded to the video platform for advertising campaigns. This practice is also common in other sectors (Castelló-Martínez and Barrilero-Carpio, 2021). Other formats widely used by luxury fashion brands are the making of and the fashion show. Both audiovisual practices are closely linked to the luxury fashion sector. The former, also known as "behind the scenes" (Hanke, 2015; Aliferis, 2017), aims to show the details of the creation of campaigns and fashion shows. Fashion shows, on the other hand, are posted on YouTube to bring seasonal collections and products to the general public.

As for the tutorials, a format associated with the world of youtubers, they are used by most brands. However, Chanel, Burberry and Louis Vuitton are the brands that experiment most with this format. On the other hand, video blogs are less used, with Kors being the brand that uses them most intensively.

In addition, it can be seen that some brands are focusing on certain formats that are associated with their brand universe. Thus, Hermes uses YouTube almost exclusively to broadcast the equestrian competitions with which it is traditionally associated, just like Burberry with music formats and Chanel with more informative formats that explore the legacy of its founder. For its part, Dior uses making of and interviews to connect with the audience.

Meanwhile, fashion films, the audiovisual format par excellence for luxury fashion brands (Del Pino-Romero and Castelló-Martínez, 2015), is rarely used on YouTube. Prada and Ferragamo are the brands that use it the most, but major fashion houses, such as Dior and Burberry, do not have any fashion films uploaded to their YouTube channel. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, these types of short films are usually submitted to fashion film festivals, and brands do not always use social media for their dissemination. Secondly, this type of format, which is costly and difficult to produce, has given way to more flexible and simpler formats that are easy to produce on social media (Rees-Roberts 2020). Despite these low data, their capacity for interaction is high in comparison with other more traditional formats.

The format that accumulates the highest number of views is the advertisement. This shows that most luxury fashion brands run paid advertising campaigns on YouTube. The interactions are similar, with the majority of them concentrated in the three most used formats: advertisements, making of and fashion shows. However, when comparing the number of videos with the number of interactions, advertisements are less effective. Similarly, the formats that generate the most interaction are interviews and fashion films.

As for the engagement rate, it should be noted that this is a formula that determines the success of individual videos, and therefore caution should be exercised when applying it to a set of videos. However, the study data shows that videos from luxury fashion houses have a very low engagement rate, and most of the formats barely achieve 1%. The interview is the format that achieves the highest percentage due to the use of comments to ask questions from the viewers. Therefore, there are formats that naturally encourage conversation. In contrast, most formats are designed to be consumed passively, just like a TV spot.

To conclude this section, and in response to RQ$_6$, it can be stated that most luxury fashion brands use conventional content strategies across the board, as a result of the massive use of the advertisement and fashion show formats. Both formats are communication tools specific to the luxury fashion sector, which brands have transferred to the YouTube platform. As far as branded content strategies are concerned, there has been a certain increase in branded content strategies since 2017, which will even surpass conventional strategies in 2019. This is especially thanks to the informative formats that are gaining ground in the sector due to the consolidation of their own media and the independence of brands from traditional media (Rees-Roberts, 2020).

It can also be seen that certain brands have a predilection for certain content strategies. Thus, Dior, Burberry, Fendi and Chanel make more use of branded content strategies, even though they also make extensive use of traditional formats. This is partially in line with Hanke's (2015: 15) data, which stated that Dior, Chanel and Burberry were using entertainment formats effectively on YouTube. In this study, it was found that Burberry and Dior are using entertainment formats, but have also incorporated informative content strategies. In the case of Chanel, they are opting for more informative formats. However, it should be highlighted that the difference between conventional content and branded content is narrow, and only concentrated in certain brands. This shows, on the one hand, that the luxury sector has been late to enter the digital medium, as previous studies have already reported (Anjelic, 2019; Blank, 2020), and, on the other hand, that this distrust is affecting the professional content creation. Nevertheless, the innovations made by some luxury fashion brands in the digital medium demonstrate that it is possible to carry out a profound renovation of content without losing the exclusivity of this kind of products. In this way, certain brands seem to be focusing on audiovisual content to bring the brand universe closer to other audiences, which could be affecting the collections themselves that seem to be conceived for on-screen consumption (Rocamora, 2016).

5. Conclusions

The study data allow us to affirm that the behaviour of luxury fashion brands is uneven on YouTube. Despite the fact that the evolution is increasing throughout the entire period analysed —2008-2019—, the individual results by brand reveal that the use of this video platform is actually very irregular, alternating periods of inactivity with phases of frenetic activity. Similarly, 2010 and 2016 are key years in the evolution of luxury fashion brands on YouTube. In 2010, 5 out of the 12 brands analysed started using it, which shows that the sector is beginning to take this social network into account. For its part, 2016 became the year in which the boom in video production began. Therefore, it can be concluded that the luxury fashion sector is reluctant to innovate in the use of new tools such as YouTube.

It can also be seen that luxury fashion brands do not have a relationship with their audience, and that, on most occasions, the channels are used as a repository of videos that are consumed asynchronously and without paying attention to the conversation generated by their viewers. Moreover, this space is often used by brands to link to these videos both on their websites and on other social platforms. Therefore, luxury tends to be distant from its viewers on YouTube, keeping the natural exclusivity of this kind of product.

Similarly, it is confirmed that YouTube channels are used to broadcast advertising content and fashion shows. Thus, the format most used by the brands analysed is the advertisement. These are the same advertising spots produced for conventional campaigns that are used for promotional content on social media. However, it is also used to broadcast fashion shows, key events of the sector's communication strategies, and other informative or entertaining content. This proves that the luxury sector is achieving this communicative independence from traditional media.

Regarding branded content strategies on YouTube, the data reveals that brands are reluctant to innovate in content production. However, entertainment and informative content has increased in the last three years —2017-2019—. It can even be concluded that in 2019 luxury fashion brands are betting more on informative branded content formats, which could be a trend in the sector that will have to be confirmed in future analyses.

This descriptive and exploratory work on the use of YouTube by luxury fashion brands is a novelty in communication studies, as it is the first time that such a long period of time —2008-2019 and more than 4000 videos— has been analysed. The evolution over time of the formats could be useful for communication managers of luxury fashion brands. However, the selected brands behave unevenly and the comparison by years and brands has made it difficult to analyse the results. In addition, another difficulty encountered is the instability of the brands' channels, which add and delete videos as they see fit. On the other hand, the identification of formats has been complex due to the diversity of styles found. In future research, we propose to compare these results with other studies on the creation of content on other social networks, such as Instagram or TikTok.

6. Person-specific contribution

Contributions	Full name
Idea and design of the work	Gema Macías-Muñoz; Marina Ramos-Serrano; Antonio Rueda Treviño
Documentary research	Marina Ramos-Serrano; Gema Macías-Muñoz
Data collection	Gema Macías-Muñoz; Antonio Rueda Treviño
Data analysis and critical interpretation	Marina Ramos-Serrano; Gema Macías-Muñoz; Antonio Rueda Treviño
Writing, format, review and approval of versions	Marina Ramos-Serrano

7. Acknowledgement

8. Bibliographic references

[1] Aliferis, G. (14/08/2017). How luxury brands are mastering social content. *Global Marketing Alliance*. http://bit.ly/3frxGUC

[2] Anjelic, A. (24/09/2019). The problem with luxury fashion's YouTube strategy. *Glossy*. http://bit.ly/3CbOlWd

[3] Ashley, C. & Tuten, T. (2015). Creative Strategies in Social Media Marketing: An Exploratory Study of Branded Social Content and Consumer Engagement. *Psychology and Marketing*, 32(1), 15-27. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/mar.20761

[4] Bazi, S.; Filieri, R. & Gorton, M. (2020). Customers' motivation to engage with luxury brands on social media. *Journal of Business Research*, 112, 223-235. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.02.032

[5] BCMA Spain (18/11/2020). *Presentación FOCO 17 nov 2020* [Vídeo]. YouTube. http://bit.ly/3Cctzpd

[6] Blank, G. (08/05/2020). *The Crossover of Luxury Fashion and YouTube*. The fashion institute. http://bit.ly/3ls8m4M

[7] Carrión, P. (10/07/2019). *Ranking de las marcas de lujo más valiosas de 2019*. Kantar. http://bit.ly/3CcPbBX

[8] Castelló-Martínez, A. y Barrilero-Carpio, C. (2021). La estrategia de contenidos en YouTube de los principales anunciantes españoles. *aDResearch ESIC International Journal of Communication Research*, 25(25), 44-69. http://dx.doi.org/10.7263/adresic-025-03

[9] Castelló-Martínez, A. y Del Pino-Romero, C. (2018). Los contenidos de marca: una propuesta taxonómica. *Revista de Comunicación de la SEECI*, 47, 125-142. http://dx.doi.org/10.15198/seeci.2018.0.125-142

[10] Castelló-Martínez, A.; Del Pino-Romero, C. y Tur-Viñes, V. (2016). Estrategias de contenido con famosos en marcas dirigidas a público adolescente. *Revista ICONO14*, 14(1), 123-154. http://dx.doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v14i1.883

[11] Costa-Sánchez, C. y Túñez-López, M. (2019). Contenidos audiovisuales en social media. Análisis comparativo de Facebook y Youtube. *Fonseca, Journal of Communication*, 19, 223-236. http://dx.doi.org/10.14201/fjc201919223236

[12] De-Aguilera-Moyano, M.; Castro-Higueras, A. y Pérez-Rufí, P. (2019). Entre broadcast yourself y broadcast whatever: la página de inicio de YouTube como síntesis de su estrategia empresarial. *El profesional de la información*, 28(2), 1-14. http://bit.ly/2VllqhO

[13] Deloitte. (2019). *Las potencias globales de artículos de lujo 2019*. http://bit.ly/3rUQHDX

[14] Díaz Soloaga, P. (2014). *Comunicación y gestión de marcas de moda*. Barcelona: Gustavo-Gili.

[15] Díaz Soloaga, P. & García Guerrero, L. (2016). Fashion films as a new communication format to build fashion brands. *Communication and Society*, *29*(2), 45-61. http://dx.doi.org/10.15581/003.29.2.45-61

[16] Duffett, R. (2020). The youtube marketing communication effect on cognitive, affective and behavioural attitudes among generation Z consumers. *Sustainability*, 12, 5075. http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/su12125075

[17] Duong, V. C. & Sung, B. (2021). Examining the role of luxury elements on social media engagement. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, *12*(2), 103-119. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2020.1853585

[18] García, A. (29/07/2018). Top 10: estas son las marcas de lujo más valiosas del mundo en 2018. *Forbes México*. *http://bit.ly/3A61RJ2*

[19] Godey, B.; Manthiou, A.; Pederzoli, D.; Rokka, J.; Aiello, G.; Donvito, R. & Singh, R. (2016). Social media marketing efforts of luxury brands: Influence on brand equity and consumer behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(12), 5833-5841. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.181

[20] Hanke, M. (2015). How Luxury Fashion Brands Utilize YouTube to Engage Consumers and Promote Brand Identity. *The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, 6(1), 69-77. http://bit.ly/3jizpwL

[21] Heine, K. & Berghaus, B. (2014). Luxury goes digital: How to tackle the digital luxury brand-consumer touchpoints. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, *5*(3), 223-234. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2014.907606

[22] Hennigs, N.; Wiedmann, K. & Klarmann, C. (2012). Luxury Brands in the Digital Age – Exclusivity versus Ubiquity. *Marketing Review St. Gallen*, 29(1), 30-35. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11621-012-0108-7

[23] Kapferer, J. N. (2014). The future of luxury: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Brand Management*, *21*(9), 716-726. http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/bm.2014.32

[24] Kapferer, J. N. & Bastien, V. (2009). The specificity of luxury management: Turning marketing upside down. *Journal of Brand Management*, *16*(6), 311-322. http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/bm.2008.51

[25] Khan, G. F. & Vong, S. (2014). Virality over youtube: An empirical analysis. *Internet Research*, *24*(5), 629-647. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IntR-05-2013-0085

[26] Kim, A. J. & Ko, E. (2010). Impacts of Luxury Fashion Brand's Social Media Marketing on Customer Relationship and Purchase Intention. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, *1*(3), 164-171. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2010.10593068

[27] López-Navarrete, A. J.; Cabrera-Mendez, M.; Diez-Somavilla, R. & Calduch-Losa, A. (2021). Formula for measuring the engagement of the viewer on YouTube: Exploratory research on the main Spanish youtubers. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación*, *12*(1), 143-156. http://dx.doi.org/10.14198/MEDCOM000013

[28] Mason, A. N.; Narcum, J. & Mason, K. (2021). Social media marketing gains importance after Covid-19. *Cogent Business & Management*, *8*(1), 1-17. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2020.1870797

[29] Ng, M. (2014). Social media and luxury fashion brands in China: the case of Coach. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, *5*(3), 251-265. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2014.907607

[30] Okonkwo, U. (2010). *Luxury Online. Styles, Systems, Strategies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

[31] Pérez-Curiel, C. y Sanz-Marcos, P. (2019). Estrategia de marca, influencers y nuevos públicos en la comunicación de moda de lujo. Tendencia Gucci en Instragram. *Prisma Social*, 24, 1-24. http://bit.ly/37h1Buz

[32] Phillips, N. (24/08/2020). El futuro de las compras de lujo, en mano de las nuevas generaciones. *Vogue*. http://bit.ly/3lpPOSG

[33] Del Pino Romero, C. y Castelló Martínez, A. (2015). La comunicación publicitaria se pone de moda: branded content y fashion films. *Revista de Mediterránea de Comunicación*, 6(1), 105-128. http://dx.doi.org/10.14198/medcom2015.6.1.07

[34] Ramos-Serrano, M. & Herrero-Diz, P. (2016). Unboxing and brands: youtubers phenomenon through the case study of evantubehd. *Prisma Social*, 90-120. http://bit.ly/3jgGnlY

[35] Ramos-Serrano, M. y Jiménez-Marín, G. (2014). Blogs y Moda: cuando los usuarios crean las tendencias. En D. Fernández-Quijada y M. Ramos-Serrano (Eds.), *Tecnologías de la persuasión: uso de las TIC en publicidad y relaciones públicas* (pp. 131-143). Barcelona: UOC.

[36] Ramos-Serrano, M. y Pineda, A. (2009). El advertainment y las transformaciones de los formatos en el ámbito publicitario: el caso de los *fashion films*. *Trípodos*, 2, 729-737. http://hdl.handle.net/11441/28879

[37] Rees-Roberts, N. (2020). After fashion film: social video and brand content in the influencer economy. *Journal of Visual Culture*, *19*(3), 405-421. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1470412920964907

[38] Rocamora, A. (2016). Mediatization and Digital Media in the Field of Fashion. *Fashion Theory*, *21*(5), 505-522. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2016.1173349

[39] Sánchez Cobarro, P. (2018). Branded content y entertainment: un impulso para las organizaciones / Branded content and entertainment: a challenge for organizations. *Revista de Comunicación de la SEECI*, *0*(45), 43. http://dx.doi.org/10.15198/seeci.2018.45.43-54

[40] Segarra-Saavedra, J. e Hidalgo-Marí, T. (2018). *Influencers*, moda femenina e Instagram: el poder de la influencia en la era 2.0. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación*, 9(1), 313-325. http://dx.doi.org/10.14198/MEDCOM2018.9.1.17

[41] Sicard, M. C. (2007). *Lujo, mentiras y marketing: ¿cómo funcionan las marcas de lujo?* Barcelona: Gustavo-Gili.

[42] Timelight Networks. (2020). *The state of online video 2020*. http://bit.ly/3yol0W7

[43] Toledano Cuervas-Mons, F.; Selva-Ruiz, D. y Díaz-Masa Gutiérrez, J. (2021). La transformación digital de la comunicación: nuevas fórmulas de creación, producción y distribución de contenidos de marcas. En J. P. Olivares-Santamaría y R. Gago-Gelado, *El Branded Content en la comunicación posdigital* (pp. 31-54). Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch.

[44] Tungate, M. (2009). *Marcas de moda: marcar estilo de Armani a Zara*. Barcelona: Gustavo-Gili.

[45] Von Abrams, K. (08/12/2020). Global Social Network Users 2020 - Insider Intelligence Trends, Forecasts & Statistics. *Emarketer.com*. http://bit.ly/2TVvgGw

[46] Vonderau, P. (2016). The video bubble: Multichannel networks and the transformation of YouTube. *Convergence*, *22*(4), 361-375. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1354856516641882

[47] Wang, R. & Chan-Olmsted, S. (2020). Content marketing strategy of branded YouTube channels. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, *17*(3-4), 294–316. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2020.1783130

Dr. María RODRÍGUEZ-RABADÁN
Universidad Internacional de La Rioja. Spain. maria.rodriguez-rabadan@unir.net.
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2601-4545

Dr. Helena GALÁN-FAJARDO
Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. Spain. egalan@hum.uc3m.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0217-8457

Dr. Cristina DEL-PINO-ROMERO
Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. Spain. cpino@hum.uc3m.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0217-8457

Mediterráneamente. Quantitative efficacy study in Estrella Damm's advertising films

Mediterráneamente. Estudio de la eficacia cuantitativa del branded content en las películas publicitarias de Estrella Damm

Abstract

This study seeks to analyse two branded content advertising films in a short film format, assigned by the Catalan beer brand Estrella Damm. Both productions are located under the same claim: Mediterráneamente. This is the name of the campaign that the brand has employed from 2009 to the present, based on a strategy that pursues brand-territory identification under the formula of entertainment. For this reason, in addition to the creation of content by a brand (branded content), we are clearly faced with two cases of branded entertainment. The two campaigns are Vale (Amenábar, 2015) and Las pequeñas cosas (Rodríguez, 2016), programmed in the summer period, focusing on the ideal that people usually have about the Mediterranean lifestyle. This article's main contribution is the methodological proposal, to analyse the effect produced on the viewer by a greater or lesser presence of brand placement within the context of branded content in these two productions. We use the Fisher Test applied to university students. It led us to the conclusion that a greater or lesser degree of brand placement does not directly impede understanding of the values of the story, nor does it impose a negative attitude towards brand presence. The study also reveals a direct relation between the short film entertainment level and the product´s purchase intention.

Resumen

El objeto de estudio de esta investigación está comprendido por dos de las películas publicitarias de branded content en formato cortometraje de la marca de cervezas Estrella Damm: Vale (Amenábar, 2015) y Las pequeñas cosas (Rodríguez, 2016), programadas en período estival. Ambas comparten el mismo claim: Mediterráneamente, basado en una estrategia de identificación marca-territorio bajo la fórmula del entretenimiento. Además de tratarse de creación de contenido por parte de una marca o branded content, nos encontramos ante dos casos de branded entertainment. La principal aportación de este artículo es la elaboración de una novedosa propuesta metodológica con el fin analizar el efecto que produce en el espectador una mayor o menor presencia de brand placement en el contexto del branded content. Mediante el Test de Fisher se hace un estudio de eficacia cuantitativa que se aplica a una muestra constituida por 66 estudiantes universitarios. A partir de las hipótesis se deduce que un mayor o menor número de brand placement no interfiere directamente en la comprensión de los valores de la historia, tampoco influye en una actitud negativa hacia la presencia de la marca. El estudio también demuestra una relación directa entre el nivel de entretenimiento de los cortometrajes y la intención de compra del producto.

Keywords

Branded Content; Branded entertainment; Storytelling; Estrella Damm; Fisher Test.

Palabras clave

Branded content; branded entertainment; storytelling; Estrella Damm; Test Fisher

1. Storytelling and Estrella Damm's advertising films

In 1876, a young brew master named August Kuentzmann Damm immigrated to the Mediterranean coast with his wife to flee from Alsace as a result of the Franco-Prussian war. There they opened their first brewery, creating a type of beer that was lighter than those of Central Europe, and more adapted to the climate[1].

This emotional anecdote was the beginning of the storytelling that would be developed over the years and consolidated in the storyline of *Mediterráneamente* (2009-2021), created by Oriol Villar.

The Anglo-Saxon word *storytelling* (Baker & Greene, 1987; Watts, 2006; Lamb, 2008; Goodman, 2008; Buster, 2013; Snowden, 1999) has various uses and connotations. It has been applied to the organisational realm (Barker & Gower, 2010), politics (Swan, 2009), business (Denning, 2005; Hensel, 2010), law (Meyer, 2014), mass culture (Fulford, 2000), and more specifically, marketing and advertising (Núñez, 2007; Farran, 2013; Vizcaíno, 2017), and it has become an indispensable tool for attracting consumers in an information-saturated environment. Storytelling provides narrative techniques and rhetorical strategies that foster identification through emotion and engagement, in order to encourage the audience to empathise with environments that are close to their hearts (Signorelli, 2014; Lambert, 2002).

The aim of this research is to analyse two of the short films in the campaign under study: *Vale* (Amenábar, 2015); and *Las pequeñas cosas* (Rodríguez, 2016). Written by Oriol Villar and Amenábar himself, *Vale* has a duration of 13:26 minutes. It was shot on the island of Ibiza, and Estrella Damm was the company in charge of production. The campaign began in June of 2015 and ended in July of the same year, and it was broadcast nationwide. The story revolves around a group of friends at a party who meet Rachel (Dakota Johnson), who is an American tourist, and they invite her to discover the most unique places on the island. One of the friends in the group (Quim Gutiérrez) falls in love with Rachel and overcomes his lack of English through the word "*vale*", or OK, which he uses as a wild card that will eventually narrate a beautiful love story.

Las Pequeñas Cosas (2016) has a running time of 10:00 minutes and was written by Oriol Villar and Alberto Rodríguez, with the latter serving as the director. It belongs to the same genre and has the same tone as the previous film: A well-known, veteran French actor (Jean Reno) has the filming of his movie interrupted and is forced to spend four days engaging in tourism and leisure in Mallorca. He is assigned a tour guide (Laia Costa), who takes him to the most authentic restaurants and magical places on the island. The actor, rugged and proud, gradually leaves his bad mood behind thanks to the sympathy of his companion, as he is impressed by her ability to enjoy the "little things" that the Mediterranean life has to offer. In short, both productions have an unmistakable magnetism inspired by the vast potential of the product that is the origin and basis of this study: beer (Cristofol, 2017).

In light of the foregoing, the aim of this study is to identify the effects that a greater or lesser recurrence of brand placement can have on the viewer, based on the premise that both campaigns represent a change in strategy by merging the product (brand) with the content in a natural way, through their own storytelling, which in turn encourages "integration of the tangible values of the brand" (Núñez, Mañas-Viniegra, Lavín, 2021: 80). On the other hand, we have proceeded to specifically examine the extent to which branded content, within the context of branded entertainment, is a determining factor in obtaining a greater understanding of the brand's values, as well as in producing a positive attitude toward the brand. To this end, several variables have been considered, such as the assimilation of values and the positive feeling that the plot is able to engender in the viewer, as well as the correlation between entertainment and purchase intention.

On the other hand, this study has been complemented with other pioneering work, such as that of consultancy firm Sociograph (2021), whose objective was to demonstrate the effectiveness of branded content for brand communication, measuring conscious and unconscious variables based on a total of 192 people, divided into subgroups of 64 participants, who were exposed to branded content stimuli in formats such as audio-visual and sound, as well as traditional advertising stimuli such as spots. Among the main conclusions, one that stands out is that the format of branded content obtains better results than traditional advertising because it connects emotionally with the viewer, and it has been demonstrated that branded content provides more credibility, in addition to being interesting and entertaining.

1.1. State of the issue regarding branded content

The short films analysed in this study have followed the advertising format known as branded content, which in turn falls within the category of entertainment. This entertaining aspect is the common thread that guides the tone of the stories analysed. As such, entertainment is the foundation on which the plot, or the content itself is based. Therefore, we can say that branded content lies within the branded entertainment format. In addition to being a powerful, persuasive instrument for future consumers, entertainment has also become an important tool for transmitting values and ideology. Furthermore,

if something entertains us, we tend to pay more attention to it and lower our resistance. Finally, in this regard it should be added that branded entertainment presents fictional, narrative elements in line with the brand's values, and it takes advantage of the expressive resources of a film script.

In general terms, we can say that branded content has an extraordinary capacity to help society move forward (Asmussen, Wider, Williams, Stevenson, Whitehead and Canter, 2016). Through the creation of valuable content, brands can connect emotionally with consumers and achieve a significant, transformative impact on society (Rodríguez-Rabadán, 2021). There are examples of projects that have been able to change the vision that parents and teachers have of education, or the way companies look to the future (Casanova, 2021). Along the same lines, Elliot-Bauzá (2021) focuses on the generosity of users with regard to content creation, as well as on the vast potential of brands to change society with the investment of time and talent. Hence, it is a format that transcends advertising itself. Such content is created and chosen freely by the public, and is easy to measure (Barbosa, 2012), thereby providing valuable information. Moreover, it works if the foundation on which the content is built is solid and in line with the brand's values. In short, it is about making an impact and contribution through branded content (Castelló-Martínez and del Pino-Romero, 2018).

The two branded content cases of Estrella Damm contain a large amount of brand presence of the product itself, which is beer. This is considered to be product placement, or brand placement within the production itself. Brand placement, or in other words, the presence of a brand in the content itself is an advertising format that has been widely studied at the academic level (Victoria Más, 1999; del Pino-Romero, 2004; del Pino-Romero and Olivares, 2006; Alamillo, 2018; Castelló-Martínez and del Pino-Romero, 2018).

For their part, Hudson and Hudson (2006), as well as other more recent authors (Nelli, 2012; Martí, Ruiz-Mafe and Scribner, 2015; Brown, Jone and Wang, 2016; and Grinta, 2017), agree on the need to analyse the effects of this brand presence on the viewer. For her part, Russell (2002) points out that the memory of a product placement or brand placement is stronger if it is meaningful, and if there is a connection with the content presented. In essence, even though the brand is the content creator, this does not negate the physical or visual presence of the product on screen. Instead, the brand chooses to show a certain number of visualisations of the product, logo, consumption, and dialogue that allude to the product, and consequently, branded entertainment items include a greater or lesser presence of brand placement in their productions.

1.2. *Mediterráneamente*: the brand's summer strategy

Formentera (2009) was the first of the campaigns that Estrella Damm launched in line with its brand-territory identification strategy. It was a major milestone in the world of advertising, and from that moment until 2014, all the paradigmatic campaigns of branded content were strategically launched in the summertime with the following common characteristics: they adopted the video clip format; they lasted about three and a half minutes; and the natural locations were diverse settings of the Mediterranean landscape: specifically, Catalonia and the Balearic Islands. Moreover, they featured unknown protagonists, mostly models, who embodied the brand's ideal of beauty as being athletic, young, and healthy. These were very simple stories of friendship and love between people who were twenty-something, where it bears mentioning that there was no diversity of ethnicity, gender, age, or physical appearance, and where the love stories lasted as long as a summer holiday.

One of the most important ingredients was using a backdrop of international groups and bands with catchy, laid-back songs, such as Billie the Vision & the Dancers, Love of Lesbian, Lacrosse, Herman Düne, and The Vaccines, which highlighted the nostalgic perspective, appealing directly to the emotions. They also used slogans that were an invitation to enjoy: "Good things never end if there is something to remind you of them" (*Formentera*, 2009); "Sometimes what you're looking for is so close it's hard to see" (*San Juan*, 2010); "Sometimes the ordinary can be extraordinary" (*El Bulli*, 2011); and "When you love what you have, you have everything you want" (*Tramontana*, 2012). Moreover, innovation took the spolight with the proposal that one of the productions, *El Bulli,* should be carried out by Catalan director Isabel Coixet, in which the famous chef Ferrán Adriá also appeared. Many of these features were maintained in the following years, yet others changed.

From 2015 onward, a different format was used: the short film, with an approximate length of 15-20 minutes, direct sound, and an international focus. While emotional engagement continued to be promoted through international bands and singers, the story (the content) took centre stage. The short films were shot by directors such as Alejandro Amenábar, Raúl Arévalo, Jonás Trueba and Claudia Llosa and starred internationally renowned actors and actresses such as Dakota Johnson, Peter Dinklage, Jean Renó, as well as national actors such as Quim Gutiérrez, Laia Acosta, Álvaro Cervantes, Ingrid García-Jonsson, Marcel Borràs, Michelle Jenner and Oriol Pla.

Since 2019, the brand has been evolving from a casual, summery style to one that is more committed to the environment, as in the short film series *Alma* (2019-2020), consisting of Act I. *Soul*, Act II. *Lovers*, and Act III. *Commitment*, which have given a voice to organizations dedicated to protecting the environment.

Estrella Damm's most prolific year was 2021 –first with *Chefs*, and then with *Volver al mar* (Return to the sea). Chefs, which was broadcast after the period of confinement caused by Covid-19, made a hopeful statement that supported national gastronomy, with the collaboration of big names such as the Roca brothers and other professionals such as Dabiz Muñoz, Maca de Castro, Paolo Casagrande, Carme Ruscalleda, Nandu Jubany, Fina Puigdevall and, once again, Ferrán Adrià.

Amor a primera vista (Love at first sight) was directed by Ian Pons, with Oriol Villar as the creative director. Filmed in Menorca, it starred Mario Casas, accompanied by Mireia Oriol and Rigoberta Bandini, author of "*A ver qué pasa*", the song that set the rhythm of the piece. Its slogan, "caring for the environment is sexy", served as the parameters of the romantic story, even though the love interest was not focused on the star actor Mario Casas (who plays himself in his "leading man" role) but rather on the character of the volunteer ecologist, although he was only given a brief shot at the end. In this way, and as defended by its creator, a new scale of values was proposed, because as stated in an article in Reasonwhy (2021) regarding the campaign, "Unfortunately, the activist or environmentalist was the oddball of the group".

The advertisement combined the two trends that the brand had been working on since the *Alma* trilogy: one was its commitment to preserving the environment on the Catalonian coast; the other was the short film format, characteristic of previous editions. The aim was to give a nod to the cultural sector, which had experienced so many difficulties due to the pandemic. In reality, the nearly six minutes of the story was a play that ended with the spectacular image of an enormous, purple-coloured, theatrical curtain falling over the Mediterranean, followed by a few scenes far from the beach where the actors celebrated the end of the play in the backstage area of a theatre.

Following this trend, Estrella Damm developed a comprehensive programme of repositioning, communication, branding, and strategic management which, according to Fede Segarra, Director of Communication and External Relations of the brand (Cristofol, 2017: 102), was based on a pioneering brand-territory strategy of communication and differentiation. To this end, they chose as a starting point the ideal image that people have of the Mediterranean lifestyle. Estrella Damm was then defined as "the Catalan beer brand with a Mediterranean flavour", as stated in its creative brief for the *Eficacia* awards:

> Estrella Damm is the beer of the Mediterranean. It writes its history next to the sea, so it has sought to differentiate itself from its competitors through its values, such as gastronomy and the Mediterranean culture. It is a way of living, being and understanding life, which has allowed it to create an emotional connection with people. As such, *Mediterráneamente* is no longer a concept, a claim, or a slogan, but an expression that epitomizes the sea, walking on the sand, meals with friends, and a toast with beer to celebrate the entire scene (Scopen, 2016: 111).

In this differentiation process, the advertiser created specific content for its consumers based on three foundational aspects: the positioning or symbolic place a brand wants to use to fill the collective imagination; the brand's personality from an emotional point of view; and the essence or distinctive aspect that characterises the brand (Cristofól, 2017). This identity reinforcement and definition made sense in an uneasy, interrelated context involving the local and the global, which could be summarised as follows: expanding nationally without losing the origins, while at the same time strengthening those origins in a scenario that is not only national, but international as well.

It is striking that in all the advertisements a strong sense of belonging was being developed based on the concept of an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983). Along the same lines, Lladonosa-Latorre & Visa-Barbosa (2020) have associated this type of advertising with an attempt to represent the nation and its identity through what has been defined by Billing (2014/1995) as "banal nationalism".

Based on the above, and once the parameters of the context on which this study is founded have been defined, the following hypotheses have been proposed for their verification:

H1. The consumer understands the values inherent in the story regardless of the number of times the brand placement appears in the short film.

H2. Increased repetition of brand placement can have a negative impact (wear-out) on purchase intention.

H3. Increased repetition of brand placement in a branded entertainment story causes discomfort for the viewer, who may see it as intrusive.

H4. Increased or decreased repetition of brand placement in the short film does not affect the level of entertainment experienced by the viewer.

H5. The feeling of being entertained by the short film is related to the understanding of the values of the story.

H6. A positive branded entertainment experience influences the viewer's purchase intention.

2. Methodology

The short film was chosen as the object of study over other formats because it is a self-contained production of short duration. As such, it was possible to allow the sample group to have the same experience as that of the viewers who saw the short film on its broadcast date, due to the sample group being exposed to it as a complete unit. Therefore, the target group included young people between 18 and 23 years of age, who are potential beer consumers. A sample of 66 students from the bilingual Bachelor's Degree of Film, Television, and Media Studies was chosen for the experiment. The sample group directly represented the target group for which the content was intended. However, they were students in which the bias in favour of advertising was very limited, as they were not specifically studying a degree in Advertising, so they were highly critical of advertising content in general, and conventional advertising in particular.

The screening of the short films took place in a classroom of the Faculty of Humanities, Communication and Documentation. The viewing of the films took place on the pretext of being an academic activity, and at no time was the objective of the screening revealed in order replicate spontaneous responses. The students could also choose whether or not to participate in the viewing and questionnaire.

The 66 participants were further divided into two groups, A and B. Group A, with 35 people, was assigned to the A Screening (*Vale*); Group B, consisting of 31 people, was assigned to the B Screening (*Las cosas pequeñas*). Each group was given a pre-screening questionnaire to assess spontaneous recall and familiarity with the brand. These questionnaires were collected after their completion. Subsequently, each group watched the film separately and then responded to the questionnaire (Table 1), as well as to whether or not they identified with the issues discussed and their intention to purchase the beer.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample

| Characteristic	Group	Levels	Total	Average age
Gender	A	Male	10	
	B	Male	7	
	A	Female	25	
	B	Female	24	
N=66			66	19

Source: prepared by the authors

The responses were subjected to a quantitative-descriptive statistical process using Fisher's exact test to verify or reject the hypotheses. Fisher's test measures statistical significance used in the analysis of contingency tables. The sample parameter of this experiment is ideal for this particular test as it offers high precision when sample sizes are small. Fisher's offers a high level of accuracy by using many factors in its formula, such as the two-sample factor for variances. Due to the composition of its formula, the error is very limited. Finally, in Fisher's test, the 0 or null hypothesis is posed by testing whether the two compared variables behave similarly. The possible results are "accepted" or "rejected" with the consequent explanation and interpretation: "The null hypothesis is always stated as an equality, so that it specifies an exact parameter value" (Moya and Robles, 2010: 401).

This methodology is suitable for assessing the weight, or importance, of the greater or lesser brand presence or brand placement in a branded content item, and discusses the relevance and intrusiveness of brand placement within this framework.

In the quantitative study (Figure 1), Groups A and B were considered as independent variables, which were differentiated in this study by the greater or lesser number of repetitions of brand placement.

On the other hand, comprehension of the values of the brand, purchase intention, attitudes toward advertising, and the degree of entertainment were used as dependent variables.

Table 2: Summary of variables used to analyse the effects on the viewer of greater or lesser repetition of brand placement. Related to H1-H4
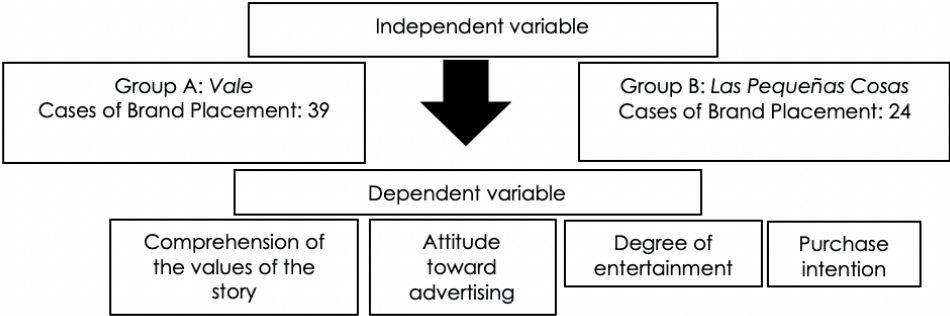
Source: prepared by the authors

On a second level, the variables were altered to study the effects produced by a greater or lesser level of entertainment and its relationship with a better or worse understanding of values, and with the purchase intention. As shown in Table 2, the relationship between the level of entertainment as an independent variable and the understanding of the values of the story as a dependent variable was studied as well.

Based on this premise, it was observed whether a greater or lesser degree of entertainment had an influence on understanding the values of the story. Finally, the degree of entertainment of the short film was analysed as an independent variable, and purchase intention as a dependent variable.

Table 3: Variables related to the level of entertainment

Independent variable	Dependent variable
Degree of entertainment of all the participants	Understanding the story's values
Groups A + B	
Degree of entertainment of all the participants	Purchase intention
Groups A + B	

Source: prepared by the authors

Before screening the video, the students in the two groups answered a question about spontaneous recall. They were given a questionnaire together with the poster of the short film, but without a beer logo nor brand placement. In order to evaluate spontaneous recall, the students who were divided into two separate groups, A and B, had to answer the first question of the survey according to the content of the poster of the short film they were going to watch later. The question was, "Do you remember which brand appears in this short film?" In this way, the students had to answer which brand appeared in the short film without having received any information that could influence their answer.

In the final research results, this section was discarded from the development of the hypotheses put forward, for the following reasons: firstly, the main objective of these questions was to provide an initial framework for the test group, offering a broad spectrum of questions so that they would not be predisposed to giving biased answers to the questions related to branded entertainment; Secondly, after the data was collected, in order to carry out a study on spontaneous recall and brand familiarity, it was necessary to include more questions for an optimal analysis. Curiously, 20 of the 35 interviewees in Group A identified the Estrella Damm brand when they saw the poster of the short film. Among Group B, 21 out of a total of 31 respondents identified the brand related to the film's poster. With regard to the question on familiarity with brands of beer, the most frequently mentioned, from highest to lowest, were Heineken, Mahou, Galicia, Damm, Carslberg and Ámbar.

At the end of the screening, the survey was distributed to the students, in which questions were asked about the repetition of the brand placement stimulus, understanding of the values, their attitude toward the advertised brand and the short film, and purchase intention. Participants were told to answer according to their preferences, based on a five-point Likert scale using the following remark: "Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements (1=strongly disagree ...5=strongly agree). Circle the option chosen in each case. Legend: SD= Strongly Disagree. D= Disagree. I= Indifferent. A= Agree. SA= Strongly Agree. The questions are summarised below in Tables 4-7.

Table 4: Replication of survey questions related to stimulus repetition

Question	SD	D	I	A	SA
R.1. Would you watch a short film if you knew beforehand that it was produced by a brand?	1	2	3	4	5
R.2. The brand presence plays a role in the story.	1	2	3	4	5
R.3. If I changed the beer brand, I would have to change the story.	1	2	3	4	5
R.4. The brand presence is realistic and doesn't seem intrusive to me.	1	2	3	4	5

Source: prepared by the authors

Table 5. Replication of questionnaire on the degree of entertainment of the short film

Question	SD	D	I	A	SA
R.5. I liked the short film I watched.	1	2	3	4	5
R.6. The story was plausible.	1	2	3	4	5
R.7. The short film offered me something new.	1	2	3	4	5
R.8. The topic of the short film captured my interest.	1	2	3	4	5
R.9. The short film I watched inspired me.	1	2	3	4	5
R.10. While watching the short film, I felt like I was living the experiences of the characters.	1	2	3	4	5
R.11. While watching the short film, time passed quickly without my noticing.	1	2	3	4	5
R.12. I discovered something new about the qualities of Estrella Damm beer.	1	2	3	4	5

Source: prepared by the authors

Table 6: Replication of the attitudes toward brand placement in the short film

Question	SD	D	I	A	SA
R.13. I generally find adverts entertaining.	1	2	3	4	5
R.14. I often try products that are advertised.	1	2	3	4	5
R.15. I think the presence of real brands in short films makes the brands more attractive.	1	2	3	4	5
R.16. I prefer short films that include brands.	1	2	3	4	5
R.17. The presence of the brand does not hinder me from following the story.	1	2	3	4	5

Source: prepared by the authors

Question	SD	D	I	A	SA
R.18. I would like to drink a Damm beer.	1	2	3	4	5
R.19. The next time I buy a beer, it will be Damm.	1	2	3	4	5

Source: prepared by the authors

In addition, the following open-ended question regarding the understanding of values was also asked: "What is the topic of the short film?" The students answered freely according to what they believed the story was about. The answers were transferred to the database as 0 for Yes and 1 for No, considering the following values established by the brand when devising the story: "gastronomy", "enjoyment", "the sea", "friends" and "little things" (the blind identification of these values offers relevant data, as it indicates whether or not the viewer grasps what the brand wants to say).

An association of terms, which was agreed upon for this research, was also carried out, in which the answers given were equated. For example, "love", "friendship", "camaraderie", "spending time together" and "bringing people together" were equated with the answer "friendship". The words "having a good time", "happiness", "having experiences", "good memories", and "carefree" are associated with the response "enjoyment".

Data processing was carried out with an Excel programme, using boxes with pre-selected values on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 to reduce the possibility of introducing erroneous data. The Excel spreadsheet was exported to StatPlus software for quantitative analysis and for making comparisons between Groups A and B, and also for making comparisons between several specific questions asked of all the participants.

The hypotheses were tested using a descriptive, quantitative, statistical analysis and Fisher's exact test (Moya and Robles, 2010). As mentioned above, given the characteristics of the study, this particular test is recommended, since the variables extracted are categorical or discrete; in other words, they are translated into specific numbers and not continuous intervals with decimals. In turn, Fisher's test for small samples is advisable as it offers accuracy in the interpretation of the data, which is ideal for this group of 66 participants.

3. Results

The results of the hypotheses proposed in this research are presented below, according to the data provided by Fisher's test.

3.1. Results of Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis H1 has been confirmed: the consumer understands the values of the story, regardless of the number of times the brand placement is presented in the short film.

Table 8: Results of Fisher's test for H1

Two-sample F-test for variances

Descriptive statistics	A	B
Sample size	175	155
Mean	0.2	0.29677
Variance	0.16092	0.21005
Standard deviation	0.40115	0.45832
Standard error of the Mean	0.03032	0.03681
Variance ratio Var[A]/Var[B]		
F	0.76608	
F Critical Value (5%)	0.77342	
Two-tailed F Critical value (5%)	0.73618	

Two-sample F-test for variances

Two-tailed p-value (H1: F ≠ 1)	0.08806	H1 rejected
One-tailed p-value (H1: F > 1)	0.95597	H1 rejected
One-tailed p-value (H1: F < 1)	0.04403	H1 accepted
F [larger/smaller]		
F	130.534	
F Critical Value (5%)	129.296	
Two-tailed F Critical Value (5%)	135.836	
H0 F=1 (5%)?	Accepted	

Source: prepared by the authors

3.2. Results of Hypothesis 2

According to the second hypothesis of this study (H2), repetition of the visual stimulus of the product can have a negative impact (wear-out) on purchase intention (Table 9). The hypothesis accepted in this case by Fisher's Test states that both Group A and Group B behave in the same way when watching the short film. The differences are not significant, neither statistically nor with regard to probability. Therefore, it could be said that a greater or lesser number of brand placements in the two short films has no direct effect. Therefore, H2 of this research is rejected: more brand placement does not necessarily have a direct negative relationship with purchase intention.

Table 9: Results of Fisher's Test for H2

Two-sample F-test for variances	Only with R-18	
Descriptive statistics		
	A	B
Sample size	35	31
Mean	1.934.286	1.877.419
Variance	211.429	124.731
Standard deviation	145.406	111.683
Standard error of the Mean	0.24578	0.20059
Variance ratio Var[a]/Var[b]		
F	169.507	
F Critical Value (5%)	181.813	
Two-tailed F Critical value (5%)	204.375	
Two-tailed p-value (H1: F ≠ 1)	0.14582	H1 rejected
One-tailed p-value (H1: F > 1)	0.07291	H1 rejected
One-tailed p-value (H1: F < 1)	0.92709	H1 rejected
F [larger/smaller]		
F	169.507	
F Critical Value (5%)	181.813	
Two-tailed F Critical Value (5%)	204.375	
H0 F=1 (5%)?	Accepted	

Source: prepared by the authors

3.3. Results of Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 focuses on the viewer's reaction to the brand placement: greater repetition of brand placement in a branded entertainment story causes the viewer discomfort, and they may feel it is intrusive.

To analyse this hypothesis, Groups A and B were treated as independent variables. The dependent variable was the sum of the results of the questions included in the section of the questionnaire related to repetition of the stimulus (Table 4), and on attitudes toward advertising (Table 6). According to Fisher's test, H3 of this study is rejected. Group A as well as Group B behaved in a similar way with regard to the dependent variable (from R1 to R4 and R13 to R17), so it can be deduced that the greater or lesser presence of brand placement in the two short films is not a determining factor in the viewer's perception of the brand as intrusive and annoying in the context of the story.

Table 10: Results of Fisher's Test for H3

Two-tailed F-Test for Variances

Descriptive statistics	A	B
Sample size	314	276
Mean	323.567	315.942
Variance	122.224	145.086
Standard deviation	110.555	120.452
Standard error of the Mean	0.06239	0.07250
Variance ratio Var[A]/Var[B]		
F	0.84243	
F Critical value (5%)	0.82541	
Two-tailed F Critical value (5%)	0.79558	
Two-tailed p-value (H1: F ≠ 1)	0.14154	H1 rejected
One-tailed p-value (H1: F > 1)	0.92923	H1 rejected
One-tailed p-value (H1: F < 1)	0.07077	H1 rejected
F [larger/smaller]		
F	118.705	
F Critical Value (5%)	121.153	
Two-tailed F Critical Value (5%)	125.694	
H0 F=1 (5%)?	**Accepted**	

Source: prepared by the authors

3.4. Results of Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 examines the influence of brand placement on entertainment in a production with these characteristics, under the following premise: "The level of entertainment generated by the audio-visual project is unaffected by the number of times the product is inserted as brand placement (repetition of the stimulus)". In order to measure the level of entertainment, answers R5 to R12 from the questionnaire were examined and presented in Table 5. The questions try to evaluate the attitude of viewers in relation to the most creative aspect of the branded entertainment audio-visual items.

For this hypothesis, Fisher's test was used to analyse the behaviour of Group A and Group B as independent variables with regard to the dependent variable of entertainment. It has been shown that H0 is accepted; in other words, the variables of Group A and Group B are independent and are not affected by what distinguishes them (in our case study, it means a greater or lesser number of brand placements in the short film). Therefore, is has been confirmed that H4 is valid: the level of entertainment generated by a branded entertainment short film is unaffected by the number of times the product (brand placement) or repetition of the brand stimulus is inserted.

Table 11: Results of Fisher's Test for H4

Two-tailed F-Test for Variances

Descriptive Statistics	A	B
Sample size	276	245
Mean	342.391	343.673
Variance	129.237	140.274
Standard deviation	113.683	118.437
Standard error of the Mean	0.06843	0.07567
Variance ratio Var[A]/Var[B]		
F	0.92132	
F Critical Value (5%)	0.81527	
Two-tailed F Critical Value (5%)	0.78395	
Two-tailed p-value (H1: F ≠ 1)	0.50849	H1 rejected
One-tailed p-value (H1: F > 1)	0.74575	H1 rejected
One-tailed p-value (H1: F < 1)	0.25425	H1 rejected
F [larger/smaller]		
F	108.540	
F Critical Value (5%)	122.658	
Two-tailed F Critical Value (5%)	127.559	
H0 F=1 (5%)?	Accepted	

Source: prepared by the authors

3.5. Results of Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 states the following: "The level of entertainment generated by the short film is related to the understanding of the story's values". The independent variable used is the general level of entertainment generated by the short film (R5 to R12) studied above. The dependent variable used was extracted from the answers to Item 4 of the questionnaire regarding the understanding of the brand's values (the answers were evaluated according to the criteria explained in the data collection section of this experiment).

Fisher's test shows a result of H0 F=1, or in other words, it is rejected; the two variables do not behave similarly. According to the data obtained, the level of entertainment generated by the short films does not have a direct relationship to a better understanding of the values of the story.

Table 12: Results of Fisher's Test for H5

Two-sample F-test for variances

Descriptive statistics	A	B
Sample size	451	400
Mean	217.295	2.22
Variance	332.558	328.481
Standard deviation	182.362	181.241

Two-sample F-test for variances

Descriptive statistics	A	B
Standard error of the mean	0.08587	0.09062
Variance ratio Var[A]/Var[B]		
F	101.241	
F Critical value (5%)	117.420	
Two-tailed F Critical value (5%)	121.096	
Two-tailed p-value (H1: F ≠ 1)	0.90069	H1 rejected
One-tailed p-value (H1: F > 1)	0.45034	H1 rejected
One-tailed p-value (H1: F < 1)	0.54966	H1 rejected
F [larger/smaller]		
F	101.241	
F Critical value (5%)	117.420	
Two-tailed F Critical Value (5%)	121.096	
H0 F=1 (5%)?	Accepted	

Source: prepared by the authors

3.6. Results of Hypothesis 6

Finally, the impact of entertainment on purchase intention has been analysed. Hypothesis 6 proposes how a positive branded content entertainment experience influences purchase intention. For this purpose, the attitudes of the total number of participants have been evaluated. This was used as an independent variable. Fisher's Test measures the relationship of this behaviour with the purchase intention, in relation to the R18 statement: "I would like to drink a Damm beer".

It also shows that H0=accepted. In other words, the two variables behaved in a similar way. If the spectator answers questions R5 to R12 related to entertainment on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with a positive evaluation (from 4 to 5), this means the dependent variable of purchase intention will also show similar behaviour on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with a positive assessment of 4 to 5 as well.

Table 13: Results of Fisher's Test for H6

Two-sample F-test for Variances

Descriptive statistics	A	B
Sample size	276	245
Mean	342.391	343.673
Variance	129.237	140.274
Standard deviation	113.683	118.437
Standard error of the Mean	0.06843	0.07567
Variance ratio Var[A]/Var[B]		
F	0.92132	
F Critical Value (5%)	0.81527	
Two-tailed F Critical Value (5%)	0.78395	

Two-sample F-test for Variances

| Descriptive statistics	A	B
Two-tailed p-value (H1: F ≠ 1)	0.50849	H1 rejected
One-tailed p-value (H1: F > 1)	0.74575	H1 rejected
One-tailed p-value (H1: F < 1)	0.25425	H1 rejected
F [larger/smaller]		
F	108.540	
F Critical Value (5%)	122.658	
Two-tailed F Critical Value (5%)	127.559	
H0 F=1 (5%)?	Accepted	

Source: prepared by the authors

4. Discussion

Considering the results obtained, it can be affirmed that in all the hypotheses contrasted through Fisher's exact test, it can be shown that a greater or lesser number of cases of brand placement in a branded entertainment short film (two in this case), such as the ones analysed, does not directly interfere with understanding the values of the story, nor does it engender a negative attitude toward the presence of the brand in the short film/s.

With regard to identifying the values of the story, it is relevant to note that none of the respondents answered the question with values related to "gastronomy" and "the sea". On the other hand, they responded positively to the terms "enjoyment", "friendship" and "little things", in this same order, from highest to lowest frequency. Even so, and according to Alemany (2017) [2], the viewer is able to maintain subconscious associations in his or her mind that do not manifest themselves in a first free response which, if reformulated in another way, could identify those elements that are also present in each short film, such as "gastronomy" and "the sea", in this case. After comparing the results of the empirical study with the brand repositioning strategy, it can be seen that the group that has participated in this experiment understands the values of a unique way of seeing life, such as the one conveyed by Estrella Damm beer in its campaigns.

The frequency of these responses can be seen below (Figure 1), which includes the identification of the values of the story by the participants.

Figure 1: Interpretation of the values according to the frequency of response by the total number of participants
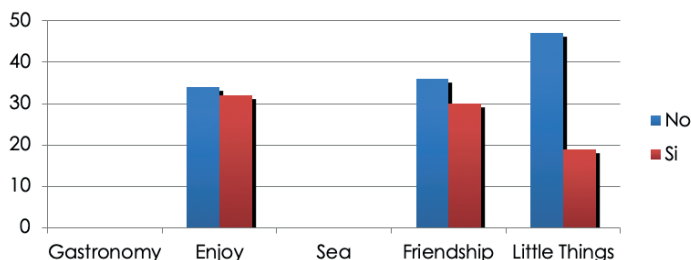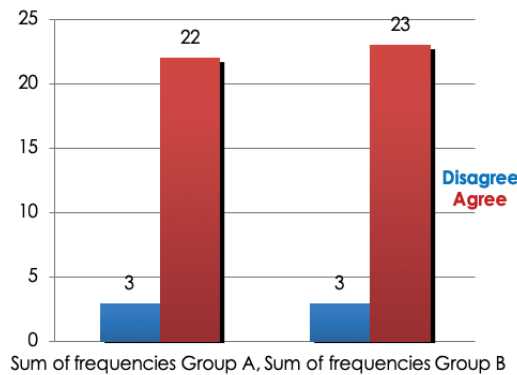

Source: prepared by the authors

Another important factor to consider in this section is the positive or negative impact that the repetition of brand placement in a content item can have. The empirical study makes a strong case for considering brand placement to be a technique that is distinct from branded entertainment. The test shows that a greater or lesser presence of the product on screen is not a determining factor for the viewer in perceiving the brand as intrusive and annoying in the context of the story (H3). As shown in this research, and based on a review of the literature, storytelling becomes a tool capable of capturing the viewer's interest and fostering engagement with the brand. Pereira (2018) points out that when faced with the

dilemma of seeking greater or lesser product presence in a branded entertainment project, the answer is different for each brand and each story, which is an idea that is supported in this analysis with the findings presented.

It is interesting to note that the people interviewed are accepting of fictional content produced by a brand (Figure 4), and in the two short films studied, brand placement is perceived as realistic and non-intrusive (Figure 5).

Figure 2: Interpretation of the sum of frequencies group A and group B: "I would watch the content if it were produced by a brand".

Source: prepared by the authors

As illustrated in Figure 3 responses to the R4 statement, "The brand presence is realistic and does not seem intrusive", is very positive, with a frequency index on the Likert scale of 4 and 5, grouped in a single value as "agree" among 25 respondents from Group A, and "agree" as well among a total of 16 from Group B. It is interesting to note that Group A watched the short film *Vale*, which had a total of 39 shots of the beer, while Group B's short film, *Las Pequeñas Cosas*, had brand placement of 24 shots on screen. Therefore, according to the theoretical corpus and data obtained from this experiment, the higher number of repetitions of brand placement is not linked to a feeling of intrusion and rejection in a branded entertainment context, as other factors can cause this effect.

Figure 3: Interpretation of the sum of frequencies of Group A and Group B to statement R4 of the questionnaire
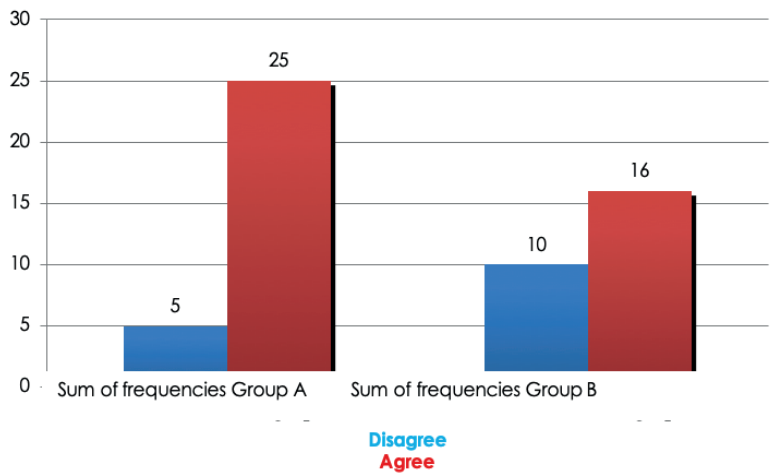
Source: prepared by the authors

The questionnaire also addressed aspects related to the viewer's attitude toward advertising (Table 6), thus allowing for new responses and to check their consistency with previously given scores. As can be seen in the following graph (Figure 4), the general attitude toward advertising in branded entertainment short films is positive.

Figure 4: Interpretation of the sum of frequencies of Group A and Group B to statements R13-R17 of the questionnaire.

Attitude toward advertising
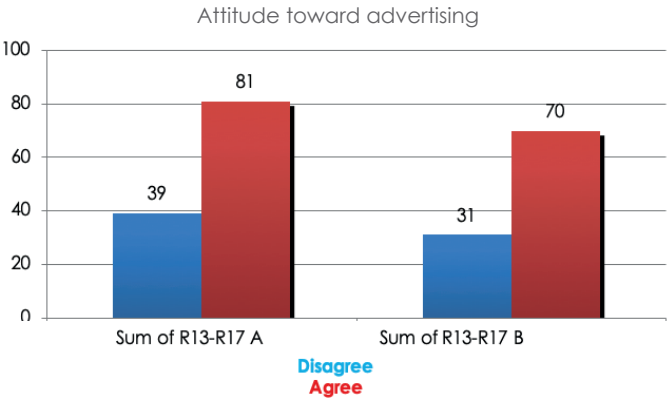
Source: prepared by the authors

Hypothesis 3 shows that the greater or lesser presence of brand placement is not a determining factor in whether the viewer perceives the brand as intrusive in the context of the story.

This finding serves as a preamble to Hypothesis 4, since it is important to know whether brand placement and the level of entertainment have a correlation. Fisher's test verifies that the entertainment value generated by the audio-visual production is unaffected by the number of times the product is inserted as brand placement (repetition of the stimulus).
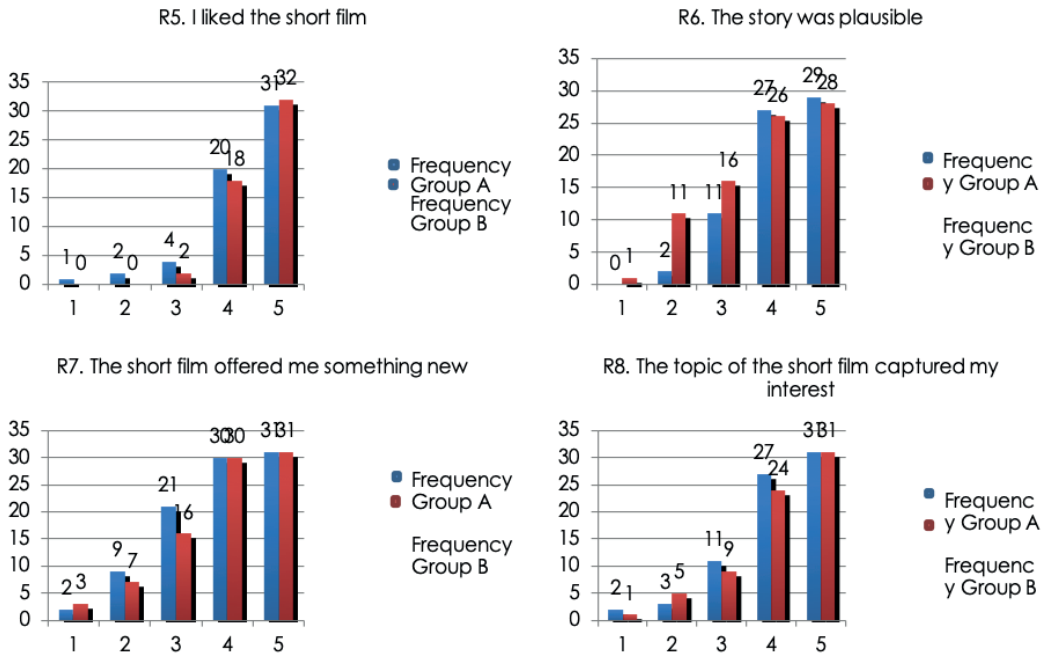
Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6 examine entertainment issues. Firstly, Hypothesis 4 confirms the independence of branded entertainment and branded content, which are categorized as independent and complementary advertising techniques. Furthermore, it has been concluded that if an item of branded content has good storytelling features and is able to capture interest and entertain, brand placement does not lower the ability to foster engagement. We can add to these conclusions the considerations of the Branded Content Marketing Association (BCMA) effectiveness study (2021), which highlights the capability of branded content to connect emotionally and entertain.

This research offers the novelty of a detailed level of different variables in order to measure the degree of entertainment at a quantitative level. We have taken into consideration the answers extracted from R5 to R12 of the questionnaire, presented in Table 5 of this study, which are questions that try to evaluate the attitude of viewers regarding the most creative aspect of branded entertainment audio-visual productions.

Figures 5 and 6 show that Groups A and B have given very similar responses, with a positive level of empathy and attitude toward the story.
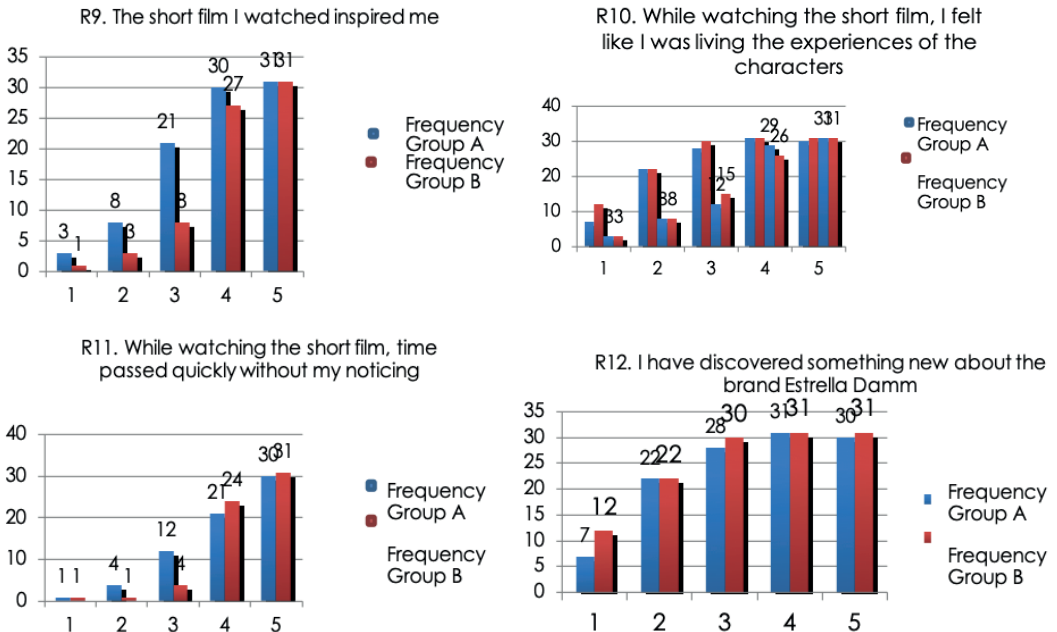
The participants in the experiment felt inspired after watching the short films, as they perceived that they were living through the experiences of the characters. On the other hand, the topic of the story also captured their interest, provided them with something new, and was entertaining. Moreover, the short film seemed plausible to them as they discovered new qualities of the brand.

Figure 5: Interpretation of the sum of frequencies of Group A and Group B to statements R5-R8 of the questionnaire

R5. I liked the short film

R6. The story was plausible

R7. The short film offered me something new

R8. The topic of the short film captured my interest

Source: prepared by the authors

Figure 6: Sum of frequencies of Group A and Group B statements R9-R12 of the questionnaire

R9. The short film I watched inspired me

R10. While watching the short film, I felt like I was living the experiences of the characters

R11. While watching the short film, time passed quickly without my noticing

R12. I have discovered something new about the brand Estrella Damm
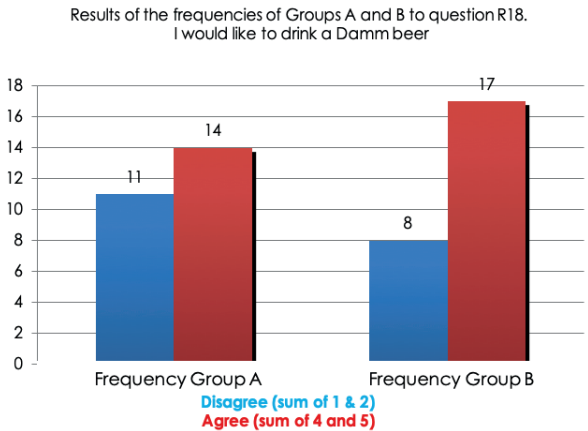
Source: prepared by the authors

With regard to purchase intention, the results of Hypothesis 2 show that brand placement does not have a negative impact on purchase intention. On the other hand, the note that highlights the verification of Hypothesis 6 is innovative. It can be concluded that the higher the level of entertainment, the greater the purchase intention. Therefore, in line with the theoretical corpus seen above, the relationship

between a positive attitude toward entertainment and storytelling has been verified, as well as the impact this has on the viewer's inclination to purchase.

Based on the questionnaire, the R18 responses related to purchase intention appear in connection with the statement, "I would like to drink a Damm beer" (see Table 7). With all the evidence available at this point in the study, it is advisable that we should discard the use of the R19 response, "The next time I buy a beer, it will be a Damm", because the purchase concept may be subject to other factors involved in the consumer's perception, such as the context in which they interpret the concept of purchase. Some might interpret the context as going to the supermarket instead of ordering a bottle of beer in a bar or restaurant, which is something they might be more familiar with.

From this perspective, when comparing the behaviour of Group A and Group B with regard to purchase intention in Fisher's test, only the R18 statement, "I would like to drink a Damm beer" (from the questionnaire in Table 7), was taken into consideration. The following graph shows how Group A and Group B responded to the statement, "I would like to drink a Damm beer", with "I agree" as the most frequent response.

Figure 7: Responses of purchase intention of the participants of Group A and Group B

Results of the frequencies of Groups A and B to question R18.
I would like to drink a Damm beer

Source: prepared by the authors

5. Conclusions

One of the motivations for carrying out this research is based on the premise that in the empirical realm, the field of branded content is a vast domain to be addressed. As mentioned in the introduction, and according to Barbosa (2021), branded content is much more measurable than other disciplines within advertising, and this study has strived to address these measurable aspects.

The importance of offering narrative consistency and artistic quality in the development of the film script has been demonstrated. It has also been verified that greater mastery of expressive resources of the script can encourage the viewers to feel empathy and, as a consequence, create a positive attitude toward the brand. According to Hardy (2018), one of the benefits of branded entertainment is its remarkable capability to produce engagement with the consumer due to its non-intrusive nature, its ability to generate highly interesting content, and its capacity to create medium- and long-term bonds through entertaining narratives.

Finally, as an innovation, the present study demonstrates the fact that a direct relationship between entertainment and purchase intention can be measured at the quantitative level. In this field, methodologies to evaluate the effectiveness of branded content are starting to emerge, such as the Ipsos Branded Content Suite tool (BCMA, 2021), which offers instruments to measure attention, engagement, and impact on purchase intention, among other parameters. This empirical experiment scientifically demonstrates that entertainment is capable of having a strong impact on the purchase of a product. This datum confirms a new attribute of branded entertainment and can provide arguments for investing in this type of activity.

In general terms, the effectiveness of branded entertainment as an advertising format has been demonstrated. We are referring to content with cinematographic overtones freely chosen by the viewer, which can be shared and viralised (del Pino-Romero and Reinares-Lara, 2013), and which is not perceived as interruptive content. The results of this research shed light on both the advertiser and the

format itself. One might consider that studying the effectiveness of a branded content campaign such as the one addressed in this paper can provide knowledge of the sector to other advertisers, and to the advertising market in general, given the problem of the saturation of conventional advertising spaces.

Today's users are extremely selective in their preferences regarding how they spend their time in relation to audio-visual consumption.

With branded content, Estrella Damm has shrouded itself in strong emotional enticements. The key lies in the brand's ability to identify what is important for itself as an advertiser, but most of all, to discover what is important to consumers in order to offer an appealing product, which is a differentiating feature for a target audience increasingly immune to advertising, and who need to know who is talking to them, what they want, what they feel, and in what way.

According to Rodríguez-Rabadán (2019), the level of satisfaction and knowledge acquired in this study has created the desire to address new issues in future lines of research focused on the analysis of branded content and its possibilities in a multitude of formats and platforms. The scope of effects of the present study is the key in triangulating the results with other areas such as psychology or sociology. Similarly, within the framework of future lines of research, we consider that more effort should be made to discover the possibilities offered by branded entertainment through the use of new technology, virtual reality, and transmedia environments.

According to the conclusions of this study, branded content in the context of branded entertainment, together with brand placement within the latter, seem to be sound approaches for advertisers who embrace the new way of understanding advertising communication. Even so, it has become evident for the immediate future that there is a latent concern, both in academic as well as professional environments, about reaching a consensus with regard to the the most complete, affordable, effectiveness-measurement systems and solutions.

6. Specific contribution of each author

Contribution	Name and surnames of the signatories in each case
Conception and design of the study	María Rodríguez-Rabadán, Helena Galán and Cristina del Pino.
Documentary search	María Rodríguez-Rabadán, Helena Galán and Cristina del Pino.
Data collection	María Rodríguez-Rabadán and Cristina del Pino.
Critical analysis and interpretation of data	María Rodríguez-Rabadán.
Writing, formatting, review, and version approval	María Rodríguez-Rabadán, Helena Galán and Cristina del Pino.

7. Acknowledgement

8. Bibliographic references

[1] Amenábar, A. (Director); Camín, Q. (Productor). (2015). *Vale*. [Cortometraje comercial]. Madrid: Estrella Damm.

[2] Asmussen, B., Wider, S., Williams, R., Stevenson, N., Whitehead, E. & Canter, A. (2016). *Defining Branded Content for the digital age. The industry experts' views on Branded Content as a new marketing communications concep. A collaborative research project*. BCMA and Oxford Brookes University and Ipsos MORI. http://bit.do/e8cCL

[3] Alamillo Madrid, M. (2018). *Brand placement y las series de televisión: construcción del personaje de Rachel a través de las marcas de moda en la sitcom Friends*. [Trabajo Fin de Grado Inédito, Universidad de Sevilla].

[4] Anderson, B. (1983). *Comunidades imaginadas: reflexiones sobre el origen y la difusión del nacionalismo*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

[5] Baker, A. & Greene, E. (1987). *Storytelling. Art and technique*. Nueva York: Bowker Company.

[6] Barbosa, C. (2021). *Encuentro digital: We make branded content: la importancia del branded content para llegar a los usuarios en la era del contenido*. https://bit.ly/31g0Ba3

[7] Barker, R. & Gower, K. (2010). Strategic application of storytelling in organizations. *Journal of Business Communication*, *43* (3), 295-312. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021943610369782

[8] BCMA (22 de enero, 2021). Presentación «Branded Content Suite». https://bit.ly/3qdbNi5

[9] Billing, M. (2014). *Nacionalismo banal*. Madrid: Capitán Swing (1995).

[10] Brown, R., Jone, V., Wang, M. (2016). *The New Advertising: Branding, Content, and Consumer Relationships in the Data-Driven Social Media Era*. Santa Bárbara: Praeger.

[11] Buster, B. (2013). *Do story. How to tell your story so the world listens*. Londres: Do Books.

[12] Casanova, J. [YouTube]. (13, abril, 2021). Encuentro digital: We make branded content: la importancia del branded content para llegar a los usuarios en la era del contenido [Vídeo]. https://bit.ly/2ZNhHfl

[13] Castelló y del Pino (2018). Los contenidos de marca: una propuesta taxonómica. *Revista De Comunicación De La SEECI*, 125-142. https://doi.org/10.15198/seeci.2018.0.125-142

[14] Cristofol Rodríguez, F.J. (2017). *Marcas de cerveza e identidad territorial: Generación de valor en medios sociales*. [Tesis doctoral, Universidad de Málaga], 102. https://bit.ly/3ozUcQx

[15] del Pino-Romero, C. (2004). *Marcas y ficción televisiva. El Product Placement en las teleseries españolas (1991-2002)*. [Tesis doctoral, Universidad de Málaga]. https://bit.ly/31lTcWN

[16] del Pino-Romero, C. y Olivares, F. (2006). *Brand Placement: integración de marcas en la ficción audiovisual. Evolución, casos, estrategia y tendencias*. Barcelona: Gedisa.

[17] del Pino-Romero, C. y Reinares-Lara, (2013). Evaluación y eficacia del *branded content*: un estudio empírico. *Questiones publicitarias: revista internacional de comunicación y publicidad, 18*, 160-177.

[18] Denning, S. (2005). *The leader´s guide to storytelling. Mastering the art and discipline of business narrative*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

[19] Elliot-Bauzá, C. (2021). *Encuentro digital: We make branded content: la importancia del branded content para llegar a los usuarios en la era del contenido*. https://bit.ly/3zS2LZF

[20] Goodman, A. (2008, 4Th Ed.). *Storytelling as Best Practice: How Stories Strengthen Your Organization, Engage Your Audience, and Advance Your Mission*. Salford: A. Goodman.

[21] Farran, E. (2013). *Storytelling como herramienta y mejora de la eficacia en publicidad. Análisis de los casos Aquarius y BMW en televisión (1992-2010)*. [Tesis doctoral, Universidad Jaime I de Castellón]. https://bit.ly/3xM3mLe

[22] Fulford, R. (2000). *The triumph of narrative. Storytelling in the age of mass culture*. Nueva York: Broadway Books.

[23] Grinta, E. (2017). *Branded entertainment: La rivoluzione del settore marcom inizia da qui*. [*Branded Entertainment. La revolución del sector de las comunicaciones de marketing empieza aquí*]. Milán: FrancoAngeli.

[24] Hardy, J. (2018). Branded Content. In J. Hardy, H. Powell & I. Macrury (Eds.), *The Advertising Handbook* (pp. 102-122). Oxon, Inglaterra: Routledge.

[25] Hensel, J. (2010). *Storytelling and your quest for business success*. Estados Unidos: Meeting Professionals International.

[26] Hudson, S. y Hudson, D. (2006). Branded Entertainment: A new advertising technique or Product Placement in disguise? *Journal of Marketing Management, 22* (5-6), 489- 504. https://doi.org/10.1362/026725706777978703

[27] Lamb, N. (2008). *The art and craft of storytelling*. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest.

[28] Lambert, J. (2002). *Digital storytelling. Capturing lives, creating community*. Berkeley: Digital Dinner Press.

[29] Lladonosa-Latorre, M. & Visa-Barbosa, M., (2020). Banal nationalism and everyday nationalism in experiential advertising. A sample of advertisements broadcast on the Catalan public television (2009-2017). *Comunicación y sociedad*. https://doi.org/10.15581/003.33.2.33-48

[30] Martí, J., Ruiz-Mafe, C. y Scribner, L. (2015). *Engaging Consumers through Branded Entertainment and Convergent Media*. Hershey: IGI Global.

[31] Meyer, P. (2014). *Storytelling for lawyers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[32] Moya Navarro, M., y Robles Obando, N. (2010). *Probabilidad y Estadística: un enfoque teórico y práctico*. Costa Rica: Editorial Tecnológica de Costa Rica (1995), 401.

[33] Nelli (2012). *Branded Content Marketing. Un nuovo approccio alla creazione di valore*. Milán: Vita e Pensiero.

[34] Núñez, A. (2007). ¡Será mejor que lo cuentes! Los relatos como herramientas de comunicación. Barcelona: Urano.

[35] Núñez, L., Mañas-Viniegra, D., Lavín, R. (2021). *El Branded Content en la Comunicación Postdigital: Estructuras, aplicaciones y casos de éxito*. Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 80.

[36] Pereira, J. (2018). *The Art of Branded Entertainment*. Londres: Peter Owen.

[37] Rodríguez, A. (Director); Camín, Q. (Productor). (2016). *Las pequeñas cosas* [Cortometraje comercial]. Madrid: Estrella Damm.

[38] Rodríguez-Rabadán, M. (2019). *Teoría y práctica del Branded Entertainment. Exploración de sus orígenes, recursos creativos, eficacia y efectos en el consumidor*. [Tesis doctoral, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid]. https://bit.ly/3s5X9dN

[39] Rodríguez-Rabadán, M. (2021). El papel de la técnica publicitaria Branded Content para generar nuevos vínculos de compromiso entre marca y sociedad. *Questiones Publicitarias*, 27, 1-7. https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/qp.350

[40] Russell (2002). Investigating the Effectiveness of Product Placements in Television Shows: The Role of Modality and Plot Connection Congruence on Brand Memory and Attitude. *Journal of Consumer Research 29* (3), 306-318. https://doi.org/10.1086/344432

[41] Scopen (2016). III Edición Content Scope España. Madrid, 111.

[42] Signorelli, J. (2014). *Storybranding 2.0*. Austin: Greenleaf Book Group Press.

[43] Branded Content Marketing Association (BCMA) (9 de abril, 2021). Sociograph. *Marketing Science Consulting* https://bit.ly/2ZWRzOO

[44] Snowden, D. (1999). Storytelling: an old skill in a new context. *Business Information Review*, 16 (1), 30-37. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266382994237045

[45] Swan, R. (2009). *El método Obama*. Barcelona: Random House Mondadori.

[46] Vizcaíno Casas, P. (2017). *Del storytelling al storytelling publicitario: el papel de las marcas como contadoras de historias*. [Tesis doctoral, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid].

[47] Watts, E. (2006). *Storytelling*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[48] Victoria Más, J.S. (1999). *Hollywood y las marcas. Product Placement*. Madrid: NewBook Ediciones.

[49] Ya está aquí el anuncio de Estrella Damm 2021: "Amor a primera vista" (16 de Junio, 2021). *ReasonWhy*. https://bit.ly/3x0lpxz

Notes

[1] https://bit.ly/3yhzxmA

[2] Personal communication (29 June 2021)

Dr. Gema BONALES-DAIMIEL
Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Spain. gbonales@ucm.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2085-2203

Dr. Blanca MIGUÉLEZ-JUAN
Universidad del País Vasco. Spain. blanca.miguelez@ehu.eus. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8834-7644

New automotive advertising formats. The SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan, branded content aimed at women

Nuevos formatos publicitarios en automoción. SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan, branded content dirigido a mujeres

Abstract
Car brands understand buying a car is a major expenditure, hence they work hard to create great campaigns to promote their models and raise awareness of their brand values by generating interesting content to facilitate the purchase process for their customers. SEAT, together with Cosmopolitan magazine, redesigned the Mii model using proposals from the magazine's readers and launched a branded content campaign aimed at women in eight European countries simultaneously, based on the #ThisIsMii concept created by the &Rosás agency. This research analyses the twelve films created by SEAT for this campaign and details the combined use of online actions based on the case-study methodology, incorporating a variety of techniques such as content analysis of these pieces and in-depth interviews and a survey of 300 people aged between 18 and 65 years. The results suggest that SEAT is changing the way the content of the brands is interpreted; it is an outstanding example of a global project between a car brand and a Hearst Group publication to promote the new Mii model and give the target female audience a new perspective on driving.

Resumen
La adquisición de un coche implica un gran desembolso, las marcas de automóviles son conscientes de ello y por este motivo crean grandes campañas para promocionar sus modelos y dar a conocer sus valores de marca generando contenidos de interés que faciliten el proceso de compra. SEAT junto a la revista Cosmopolitan rediseñan el modelo Mii gracias a las propuestas de las lectoras y en torno al concepto #ThisIsMii creado por la agencia &Rosás lanzan una campaña de branded content dirigida a mujeres en ocho países europeos. El objetivo de la presente investigación es analizar las doce películas creadas para esta campaña y detallar el uso combinado de acciones online a partir de la metodología del estudio del caso (case study), incorporando varias técnicas como el análisis de contenido; entrevistas en profundidad y una encuesta a 300 personas de entre 18 y 65 años. Los resultados sugieren que SEAT cambia la forma de interpretar el branded content y constituye un ejemplo destacado de proyecto global entre una marca automovilística y una publicación del grupo Hearst para dar a conocer el nuevo modelo Mii y hacer que el público femenino al que se dirigen tenga una nueva mirada sobre la conducción.

Keywords
Branded content; Digital campaigns; Automotive; Advertising; SEAT; Brand strateg

Palabras clave
Branded content; Campañas digitales; Automoción; Publicidad; SEAT; Estrategia de marca

1. Introduction

For decades, brands, marketing specialists, and creative advertising designers have been faced with the difficult task of reaching people who see advertising as an intrusive form of communication. Contemporary society is made up of increasingly informed, intelligent consumers with changing needs. These consumers are not interested in conventional messages, even about mainstream products or services, yet they are open to brands that best suit their needs, whose values are aligned with their own, and with whom they can share experiences and connect emotionally.

Thus, the technological revolution and transformation of the media (Scolari, 2012) have brought about an important change in advertising communication (Del-Pino, Castelló and Ramos-Soler, 2013). Consequently, the growing use of the Internet has displaced the relationship that consumers had with traditional media, as they watch less television and spend more hours surfing the Internet (Martín and Fernández, 2014). As such, in order to reach these consumers, it is necessary to do so through differentiated advertising strategies. Advertainment was created as a combination of information, entertainment, and advertising (Imbert, 2003; Horrigan, 2009), for the purpose of responding to the needs of the prosumer (Toffler, 1980), who is trying to move away from conventional advertising, and who wants to be involved in the process of making decisions, expressing their interests and tastes, and generating content and opinions in order to influence others. By combining advertising and entertainment, branded content offers several advantages to brands, one of the most important of which is that it offers different narrative structures, and the narrative discourse is designed specifically for them (Del-Pino-Romero and Castelló-Martínez, 2015: 112).

Overwhelmed by brands, messages, and noise, consumers try to put distance between themselves and advertising. Moreover, no sector escapes this situation, not even the automotive industry. For this reason, several authors point to vehicles as a high- involvement product (Chen and Quan, 2021), and they advise product brands in this category to produce content of various types in order to foster a link between the brand and the consumer (Lou, Xie, Feng and Kim, 2019).

After a thorough literature review, publications have been found regarding the differences between branded content and product placement (Rogel del Hoyo and Marcos Molano, 2020), as well as branded content for luxury brands (Castillo-Abdul, Bonilla-del-Río and Núñez-Barriopedro, 2021), both of which have been found in the media (Miotto and Payne, 2019) and in the field of fashion (Arbaiza Rodríguez and Huertas García, 2018). However, there is a scarcity of academic publications related to the automotive sector and branded content, and even less regarding car brands aimed at the female audience, which is why this line of study has been addressed herein. Specifically, the international campaign created by Cosmopolitan for the SEAT Mii has been studied as a specific example of branded content aimed at women with the objective of changing their vision of the world of driving.

This research focuses on a SEAT brand case study due to the importance of the automotive industry for the Spanish economy, as the sector accounts for 10% of the Gross Domestic Product (Bonales and Mañas, 2021). Moreover, it is one of the sectors with the highest amount of advertising investment, having reached 13% of total advertising expenditure in 2018 (Infoadex, 2019). In addition, this Spanish car manufacturer is the leader in advertising investment on the Internet (Bonales and Mañas, 2021; Bonales, 2020a), and in 2020 it led the rankings in the Spanish market for the third consecutive year. In 2012, the Mii car model was recognised as the "Best Urban Vehicle" in Spain by the readers of *Mujer Hoy* magazine through its website, and the same year in Denmark, it was named "Car of the Year" (Pérez, 2012). This reaffirms the general acceptance as well as the innovative technology of this urban utility vehicle, which is the object of study in this research.

1.1. The automotive industry and the use of digital media in Spain

An automobile is one of the most expensive consumer products and its purchase is one of the most complex processes as well. For some authors, it is a lifestyle, a status symbol, a sexual and cultural icon, and even a means of mass transport. Its purchase involves a rational process based on the search for information, test drives, and comparisons (Bonales, 2020b; Bonales, 2021).

The rise of digital communication, and specifically social networks, has transformed consumer habits (Martínez, García and Sendín, 2013). These networks are becoming increasingly important in the communication strategy of brands because they are Internet spaces where people and companies maintain active communication with each other, and there is interaction with the target audience as well (Pedroni, 2013; Mir, 2016).

**Figure 1. Activities (%) published on social networks**
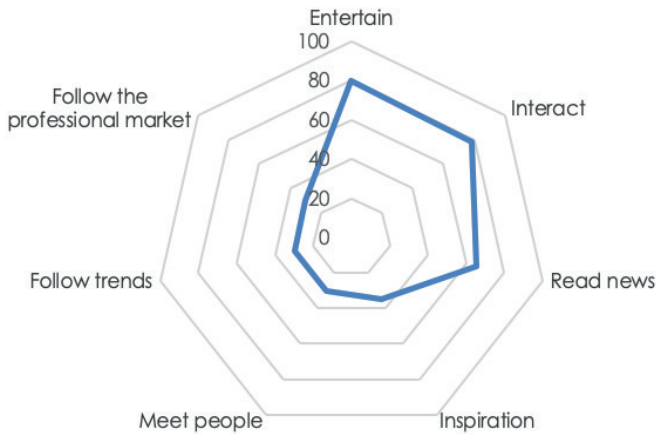
Source: prepared by the authors based on IAB Spain (2021)

The process of making a purchase decision, as well as consumption patterns, have been changing in recent years as citizens have gained greater access to information at their disposal thanks to the Internet. According to IAB Spain (2020a), 86% of potential customers search for information through this medium before visiting a dealership, and they also inquire about the brand, as well as its models, features and prices (Bonales, 2019).

A study conducted by IAB Spain in collaboration with PwC (2021) states that 36% of users engage with social networks for information, 29% for entertainment, and 25% to follow trends, respectively. According to the study, the act of following brands has fallen, yet there has been an increase in brand penetration.

The same study has determined that 75% of companies use social networks to sell, 51% to respond to doubts, and another 51% to generate brand image. Of the 75% of companies that use their official accounts for commercial purposes, 17% are automotive companies (IAB Spain, 2020b).

Figure 2. Objectives of the use of social networks by businesses
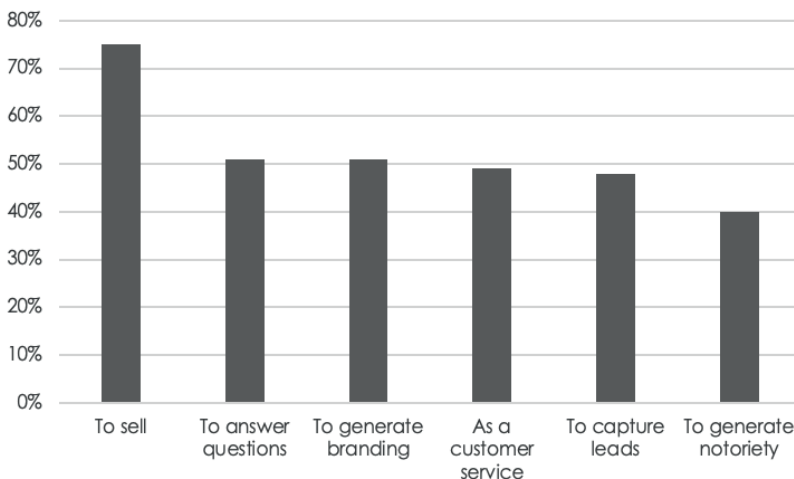
Source: prepared by the authors based on data from IAB Spain (2020b)

1.2. Branded content in the automotive industry

Branded content involves creating stories that are faithful to the brand's values, and through such content brands are able to mobilise and inspire potential customers –it is also the most efficient way of conveying a message (Cárcar, 2016). Consumers do not simply demand a product or service, but rather they want to communicate and identify with the values conveyed by the brand (Muller, 2016). Therefore,

one of the keys to this technique is storytelling, which offers the persuasive power of stories, not only to inform but also to create emotion that has an impact, and to generate a positive recollection in the minds of consumers. The characters in each story must be able to create empathy with the audience (Baraybar and Luque, 2018). Thus, emotional content has the potential quality of going viral. It involves the creation of content by the brand that is attractive to an individual, and that even engenders the desire to share this content with others and disseminate it on his or her social network.

Within the automotive sector, the first campaign to use branded content was an item for BMW, the German car manufacturer of high-end vehicles and motorcycles. In the year 2000, the US agency Fallon offered to make a series of short films for the brand, each of which was carried out by a renowned Hollywood director. BMW bought the idea and created the production company BMW Films, from which eight short productions were made under the name "The Hire", telling the adventures of "The Driver" (Clive Owen), a man who goes from one place to another in different models of the brand, highlighting aspects of performance from the point of view of entertainment, which was the reason for its success and virality. This branded content campaign was launched between 2001 and 2002. It received awards at the Cannes Lions Creativity Festival and represented a turning point in the history of Internet advertising. Fifteen years later, BMW repeated the success of the first series with "The Escape" on its BMW USA YouTube channel.

These productions were followed by others for brands such as MINI USA with "Hammer and Coop" (2007), Ford Motor Company with the short film "Le Fantôme" (2016), and Mazda, Subaru and Audi with their short film "The Eighth Dimension" (2018), which was used for the launch of the Audi Q8 and screened at the San Sebastian Film Festival.

There is no doubt that since the beginning of the 21st century, car brands have had to reinvent themselves to create focused messages, without an obvious intention to advertise, in order to continue connecting with consumers. While in the beginning microsites, fiction films with well-known directors and actors, and above all short films stood out (Pineda, Pérez de Algaba and Hernández-Santaolalla, 2013), which in some cases provided economic support for emerging audiovisual projects (Tur-Viñes and Segarra-Saavedra, 2014), automotive companies have been driving the trend of using digital channels to integrate attractive content related to their brands in order to generate emotion and achieve measurable results through experiences (Regueira, 2011).

Creative professionals face a big challenge in understanding the technology and communication revolution in order to convey the values of automotive brands, while at the same time establishing a bond with consumers through good ideas, storytelling and entertainment. The challenge is even greater when it comes to reaching women. If "the substantive content of competing products is difficult to differentiate, the selling effort shifts to differentiating distinctive aspects through which buyers can be influenced" (Levitt, 2007: 171), and this is where branded content must come in.

A study disseminated by magazine publisher TI Media, and presented at the "Automotive Seminar" organised by the International Advertising Bureau (IAB) in London in 2017, revealed that more than three quarters of women (the sample consisted of readers of Marie Claire and other brands from the same publishing group) believe that the automotive industry does not understand them as consumers (Marketing Communication News, 2018). Although this data is alarming, it is also encouraging for automotive brands as it offers them an opportunity to generate engaging content that appeals to the female audience.

In 2019, there were around 7.8 million women in Spain who were listed as the primary drivers on their vehicle insurance policies (UNESPA, 2019). According to the study, which was carried out by the *Unión Española de Entidades Aseguradoras y Reaseguradoras* (Association of Insurance and Reinsurance Companies), the cars considered most oriented toward the male population are the following models: BMW 3 Series, Volkswagen Passat, Audi A4, Ford Mondeo, Renault Laguna, and SEAT León. On the other hand, women prefer urban and utility models such as the Nissan Micra, Toyota Yaris, Volkswagen Polo, and Citroën C3. At the same time, Mini, Daewoo, Chevrolet, Fiat and Toyota are considered to be the brands that women buy the most. In the case of men, Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Mitsubishi, Volvo, and Audi top the rankings (UNESPA, 2017). Women always choose the same car, and regardless of age, the SEAT Ibiza is the model that most women drive in Spain, according to a report entitled *Y tú, ¿qué conduces?* (And you, what do you drive?).

Consequently, there is an obvious gender gap in the automotive sector that has not been taken into account by brands and agencies until now. This can be reduced by using branded content as an advertiser-driven initiative. This is the case of "Novel Adventures" (2008), the first online series aimed at women created by the car brand Saturn, which is part of the General Motors group. Even though it is difficult to find examples similar to the one just mentioned, SEAT has carried out two international campaigns with the Mii car model that could be included in this short list.

The SEAT Mii by MANGO (2014) was a collaboration between two Barcelona-based brands from two very different sectors, automotive and fashion. This special edition SEAT Mii was presented at the 080 Barcelona Fashion event, and an online competition was launched through social networks and Talenthouse for the purpose of offering the opportunity to design accessories that would be included in the edition. The SEAT Mii by MANGO offered the option of customisation with an upgrade of the standard equipment, and it even allowed buyers to purchase 15 units directly from the Amazon.fr website (exclusively for the French market), with a commitment to direct home delivery 72 hours after the purchase under the hashtag and web link #DeliveryToEnjoy.

Figure 3. Internet advertisement for the sale of the SEAT Mii By MANGO on Amazon.fr


Source: Amazon.fr

As Ramos-Serrano and Pineda-Cachero (2009: 729) point out, the main objective of advertainment is to "lure the audience to the values of a brand in an attractive, suggestive way. Through the use of concepts such as advertainment, brands apply the knowledge of the entertainment industry to the creation of their own content". This was the aim of SEAT when it teamed up with Cosmopolitan to jointly create the SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan. The campaign, created by the &Rosàs agency after winning the open bid, focused on the concept known as #ThisIsMii. The global project has been carried out simultaneously in the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France, The Netherlands, Ireland, Germany and Denmark, and it departed from the concept of conventional advertising in order to raise awareness of the new SEAT Mii.

This co-branding (or brand partnership) with Cosmopolitan represents a clear, direct approach to a well-defined target with the aim of breaking into the 18 to 35 year old female market. The launch of the new car on 16 September 2016 at the #FashFest in London marked the end of a project that began a year earlier and resulted in a branded content campaign with various videos called "Horoscopes" and "Fast Food". These videos appeared on the social networks of both SEAT and Cosmopolitan from January to March 2017. Horoscopes are a series of 12 audiovisual productions that adapt the magazine's classic horoscope section to a current and contemporary feminine point of view, thus providing an open, comprehensive vision of the world of women, which in this case revolves around the ways of driving with their corresponding hashtags to be published on the Instagram, Twitter and Facebook accounts of both brands. These videos reflect the character of each zodiac sign in car-related circumstances, as well as the driving experiences from the point of view of the women in the videos of #ThisIsMii. The hashtags are a resource used throughout the campaign, as they are the common thread employed to highlight the personality of #ThisIsMii and open a universe of possible interpretations based on irony, a positive and carefree attitude, and enjoyment, which are values typical of both SEAT and Cosmopolitan.

The campaign kicked off ahead of the car launch with editorial content in the magazine, both print and online versions, about the world of driving. These posts were followed by others in order to generate excitement about the new Mii being showcased at #FashFest 2016 in London. SEAT's challenge was to design the new Mii Cosmopolitan special edition in accordance with the expectations of the target audience, which was a young, active, independent woman, by focusing on the lifestyle concept, thus adding a differential value not found among its competitors. To this end, Cosmopolitan readers were involved in the design of the special edition "Cosmopolitan Loves Mii".

Figure 4. Publication in Cosmo Magazine about the SEAT Mii By Cosmopolitan
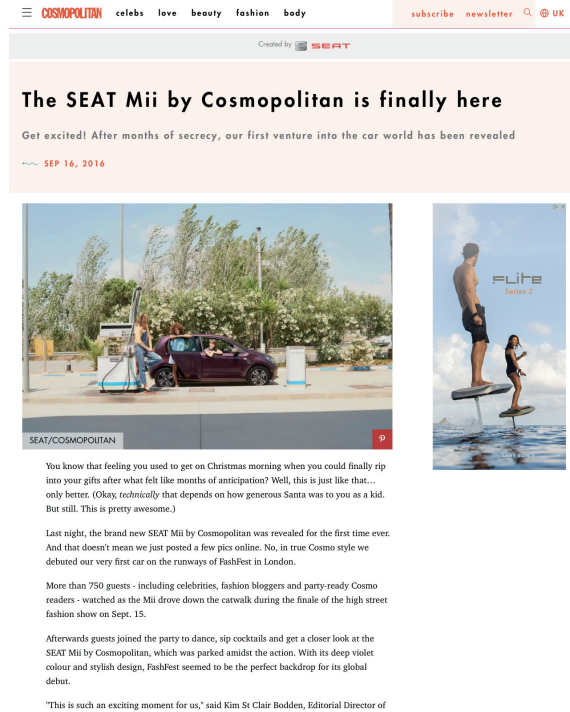
Source: Cosmopolitan UK

2. Methodology

The overall objective of this research is to study the international female-oriented branded content campaign for the Mii car model, SEAT's compact urban vehicle designed in collaboration with Cosmopolitan magazine and aimed at women between 18 and 35 years of age. The specific objectives are as follows:

- To determine the differences between women and men regarding the most highly-valued features when choosing a car, as well as the dissimilarity between the genders in relation to their awareness and recall of car advertisements.

- To describe the combined digital media strategy in the campaign #ThisIsMii.

- To identify the codes used by the SEAT brand within the concept of #ThisIsMii and analyse the 12 videos based on the signs of the zodiac.

In this research, a mixed methodology involving both quantitative and qualitative aspects has been used. The first phase consisted of reviewing the state of the issue on sales and investment data, the purchase process, and Internet advertising in order to develop the theoretical framework. To this end, we used advertising investment data according to brand and media, which was extracted from Infoadex, in addition to sales data published by the Spanish Association of Car and Truck Manufacturers, (*Asociación Española de Fabricantes de Automóviles y Camiones*) (*ANFAC*), as well as by the Federation of Automotive Dealer Associations (*Federación de Asociaciones de Concesionarios de la Automoción*) (*FACONAUTO*) in their annual reports published on their websites.

In the second phase, a survey was carried out between October 2019 and March 2020 based on a sample of 300 people aged 18-65 throughout the country in order to obtain information related to consumer criteria in the purchase decision in addition to their knowledge and recall of car advertising. The questionnaire, designed using the Google Forms tool, consisted of a set of open-ended questions on general introductory issues for the purpose of determining gender, age, car make or model, and other more specific questions on the users' knowledge and recollection of the automotive industry and its advertising in order to determine the influence of the latter on the decision to buy a car. This series of questions was followed by a semi-closed set of questions on the assessment of technological attributes and features that respondents were asked to rate based on a Likert scale.

In order to obtain the sample, the authors used the technique known as 'snowball sampling' (Van Meter, 1990), which consists of identifying the first persons to be surveyed and then obtaining other contacts, and so on, until the necessary sample is collected.

In the third phase, a case study method was applied, which originated in the Chicago School (Arzaluz, 2005), although the Harvard Business School has been the most successful in spreading the use of this methodology (Garvin, 2003). In order to carry out the case study, a content analysis of the zodiac videos was carried out (see Table 1), and an in-depth interview was conducted with a female advertising professional. This person is freelance art director Victoria Salsas, who was the only idea person at the &Rosás agency to participate in the creation and development of the #ThisIsMii campaign . The interview was conducted online, and the script allowed the interviewee to incorporate new topics or approaches into the conversation, with the investigators acting as a kind of "research instrument" (Taylor and Bogdan, 1987: 101), whose role was not only to obtain answers, but also to identify what was interesting for the research and how to obtain that information. The interviewee's input was vital to the present study, and the act of recording the interview was a key element in proving the validity and reliability of the data obtained from the research and in overcoming any possible bias on the part of the researchers in their interpretation of their own results (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).

Even though the case study methodology is most commonly used in business research and marketing (Ellet, 2007; Guzmán and Alejo, 2017), this qualitative technique has been highly important in the present context, as it has assisted the authors in understanding and analysing the brand strategy used by SEAT and its international partnership with Cosmopolitan.

Table 1. Categories examined in the content analysis

Categories	Description
Horoscope	Zodiac signs are represented in each of the videos. [Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces]
Car	Presence of the SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan car model [yes, no]
Protagonist	Indication of which element has the status or quality of being the protagonist [product, brand, character]
Shot	Visual and physical perspective of characters, objects and image elements [Close-up, medium shot, long shot]
Background	Scenery or setting used to present the main action [neutral, city, mountains, sea, and road]
Background colour	Color used on stage or background decoration [white, black, grey, blue, green, yellow, brown, orange, red, purple]
Car Colour	Colour used for the SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan car model [violetto, candy white]
Headline	Presence of a headline or text at the beginning of the piece [yes, no]
Copy	Presence of text during the piece [yes, no]
Claim	Presence of a closing at the end of the piece [yes, no]
Logo	Presence of the SEAT brand logo [yes, no]
Insight	Concept obtained from the driving experience in which a solution is sought for a problem.

| Categories	Description
Performance	Technical feature or quality of the vehicle that highlights each video.
Attitude	Characteristics transmitted in relation to the personality of each car reflected by a zodiac sign.

Source: Prepared by the authors

3. Results

3.1. Survey: most highly-valued features; and respondents' interest in and recall of automotive advertising

Of the 300 respondents, 82% of the sample own a car (57% men and 43% women), while the remaining 18% say they do not own a car (43% men and 57% women). Likewise, out of the 43% who are men, 50% belong to the 18-34 age group, 31% to the 35-50 group, and 19% to the over-50 age group. In the case of women, 76% are in the 18-34 age group, 19% in the 35-50 group, and 5% in the over-50 age group.

Even though there are approximately 155 car brands in the world, the main car manufacturers are from Europe, the USA, and Japan, and these three dominate the European market with around 20 brands, as shown in Figure 5. Among female car owners, the three most common brands were Ford (17%), SEAT (13%) and Toyota (13%), and among male owners they were Audi (12%), Renault (12%) and BMW (11%). However, even though the numbers are smaller, men are the exclusive owners of car brands such as Tesla, Suzuki, Maserati, Mazda, Jaguar, Dodge, Jeep, Mercedes and Alfa Romeo, as can be seen in the graph below

**Figure 5. Comparison of gender and car owned by the respondents**
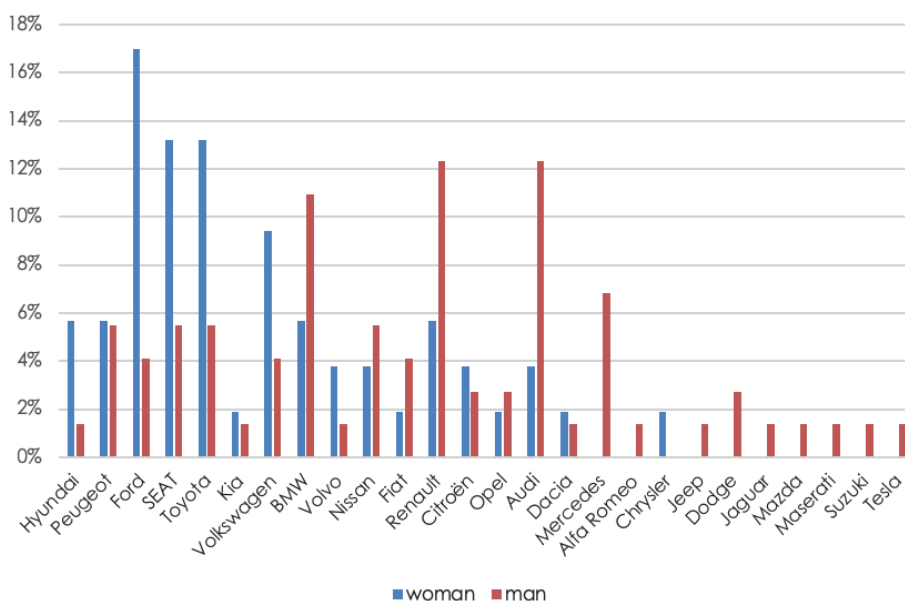
Source: prepared by the authors

In relation to the respondents' interest in advertising, 51% said they do not pay attention to advertising, while 49% said they do. Of the 51% who said they do not pay attention to advertising, 21% of this percentage are respondents who said they do not own a car, and 79% do own a car. At the same time, of the 49% of respondents who pay attention to advertising, 70% are women and 30% are men. Later, when asked to spontaneously recall an example of a vehicle advertisement, it was observed that the knowledge of the sector in the sample is medium to low. Few respondents gave examples, and those who did so responded only vaguely with ambiguous items. They cited BMW's famous "Do you like driving?" production, a campaign that is more than twenty years old, created in 2000 by the agency *S,C,P,F,. Another example is Volkswagen's "Like a Golf is not a Golf", which is a more recent campaign created in 2019 by the agency known as DDB Spain. Only 55% were able to write down an example and name the medium. The remaining 45% either didn't have this information, didn't remember, or didn't know where they had seen the advert.

In terms of attribute assessment by the respondents, the entire sample gave the highest score to safety, followed by fuel consumption, a spacious luggage compartment, and compliance with environmental legislation. On the other hand, the attributes they rated least enthusiastically were promotion, infotainment, and the warranty.

The responses of SEAT brand owners are very similar to those of the majority of the respondents. They also gave the highest scores to safety, fuel consumption, price, and a spacious luggage compartment. This was followed by warranty and comfort, with the same score, and last place was held by design.

Figure 6. Attribute ratings by SEAT brand owners
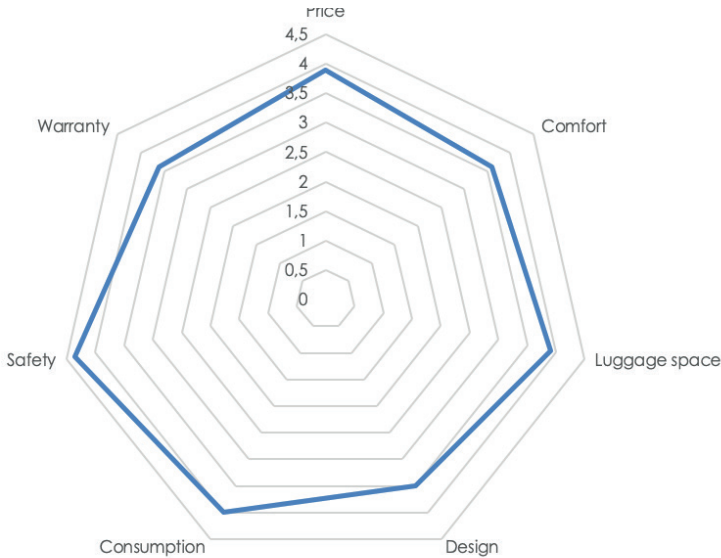
Source: prepared by the authors

The female owners of a SEAT car rated safety the highest, followed by price, fuel consumption, comfort, and warranty. Likewise, men also rated safety the highest, followed by fuel consumption, technology, comfort, and performance. Thus, safety and fuel consumption are the two aspects of most concern to both male and female vehicle owners of this brand, yet they differ with regard to other variables. For women, comfort and warranty are more important than technology.

Figure 7. Evaluation criteria according to the gender of respondents
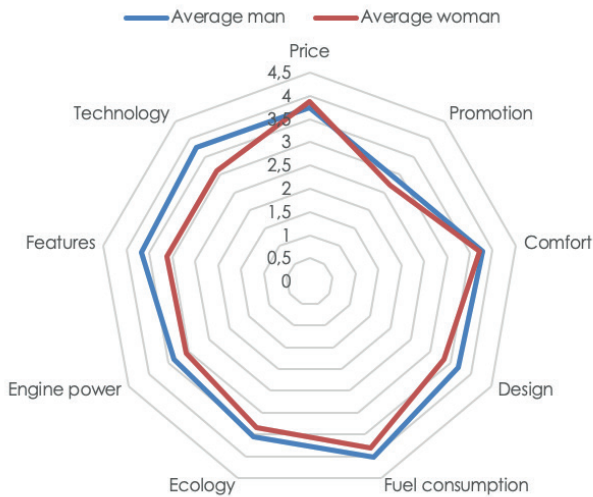
Source: prepared by the authors

According to the results of the survey, men give a higher rating to a vehicle's features. Of these, they consider the blind spot detector, connectivity, and cruise control to be the most useful aspects. On the other hand, women believe that the blind spot detector, GPS navigation, and cruise control are the most useful features.

Figure 8. Performance rating according to the gender of respondents

Source: Prepared by the authors
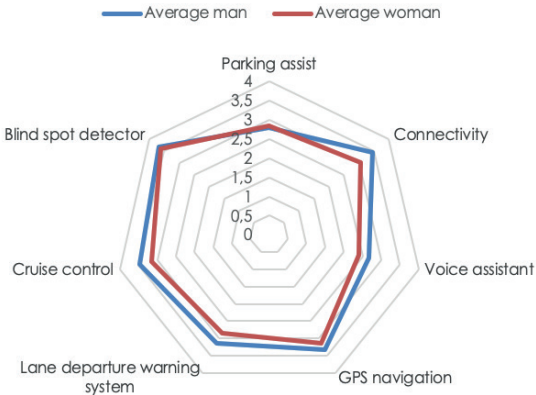
Respondents whom we might define as older, as they belong to the 36-65 age range, look for safety features such as Lane Departure Warning, while younger respondents in the age range of 18-35 rate GPS navigation and connectivity more highly. The following features are incorporated into the SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan, as its focus is on a very specific target audience, or in other words, women between 18 and 35 years of age: hill start assist; infotainment systems; and the Drive Mii App (available in Playstore or AppStore for Android and iOS). These features allow for control of the infotainment system from a smartphone, and also include accessories such as wireless charging for the mobile phone's battery and more. At the end of each horoscope video of the campaign analysed, emphasis is placed on several of the features identified as important for the results of our questionnaire. Accordingly, each zodiac sign focuses on one feature: Virgo: Rear parking sensors; Scorpio: Gear shift indicator; Sagittarius: Roadside assistance; Pisces: Drive Mii App; Libra: Brake assist; Leo: Lifestyle pack and parking assist; Gemini: two exclusive colours, candy white and violetto; Capricorn: car hook for hanging things; Cancer: exclusive interior details; Aries: space; Aquarius: no extra costs; Scorpio: Gear shift indicator; Virgo: rear parking sensors; and Taurus: smartphone integration.

3.2. Content analysis of the horoscope productions of the SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan

There are twelve signs of the zodiac, and each one has certain characteristics and strengths that can influence an individual's personality, how they interact with other people, and their attitude toward life. This is precisely what is reflected by the #ThisIsMii campaign. Each video conveys the characteristics of each zodiac sign that define the personality of each of the women who appear in the adverts. Thus, the twelve stories revolve around each horoscope, with an adjective assigned to each one: Sagittarius: competitive; Pisces: sensitive; Libra: sociable; Leo: confident; Gemini: unpredictable; Capricorn: resourceful; Cancer: loyal; Aries: original; Aquarius: clever; Scorpio: passionate; Virgo: meticulous and Taurus: tenacious. In order to intensify or reinforce the characteristic in question, "*tan*", which in English means "so" (in the case of the English campaign) has been added in front of each adjective.

The twelve videos have a duration of 27 seconds, and all of them have exactly the same structure. All the stories are different, and are portrayed by different characters. Moreover, all the protagonists are young women between 18 and 35 years of age, who are part of the campaign's target audience and, at the same time, all the videos are narrated by a female voice-over.

Figure 9. Horoscope-based #ThisIsMii campaign videos
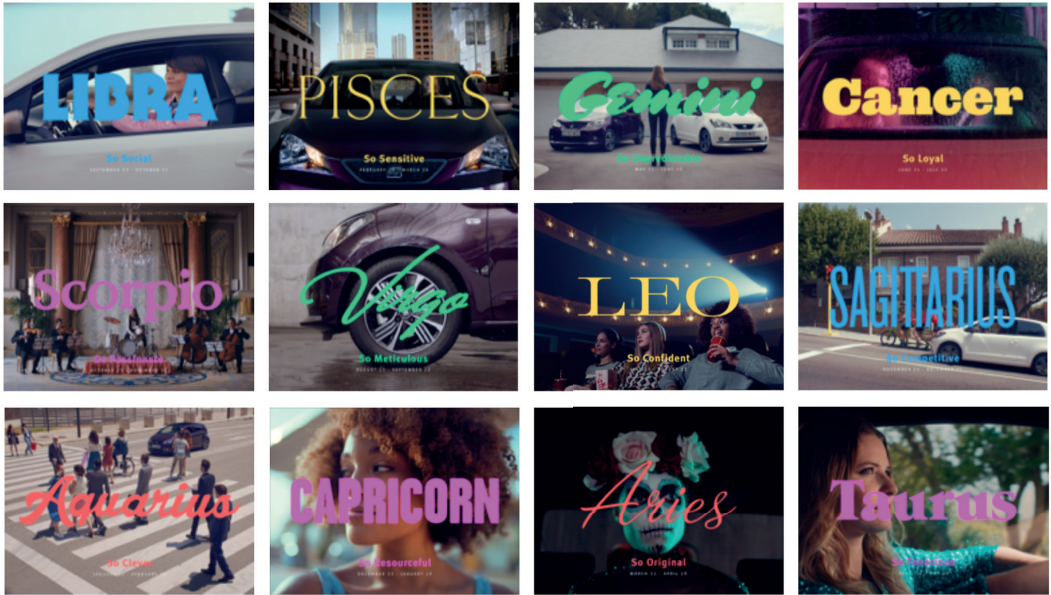
Source: Vimeo of &Rosás

The structure of each video is characterised by the following opening format: "Horoscope + adjective (called attitude in the parameters) + dates of the sign". Thus, in the video corresponding to the Sagittarius sign, it begins as follows: "SAGITTARIUS, So Competitive, 22 November-21 December". However, despite sharing the same structure, a different typography and colour is used for each sign in order to transmit the personality linked to the different zodiac signs. The colours used in these typographies are yellow (3 times); magenta (3), coinciding with the corporate colour of Cosmopolitan; blue (2), coral (2) and green (2). Similarly, the videos also end the same way, or in other words, the ending is the same for all of them, as can be seen in Figure 10, and corresponds to the structure, "SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan + Features + SEAT Logo". Thus, in all the videos, the SEAT logo is present, as can be seen in the following figure.

Figure 10. Screenshots of the closing of several videos from the #ThisIsMii campaign
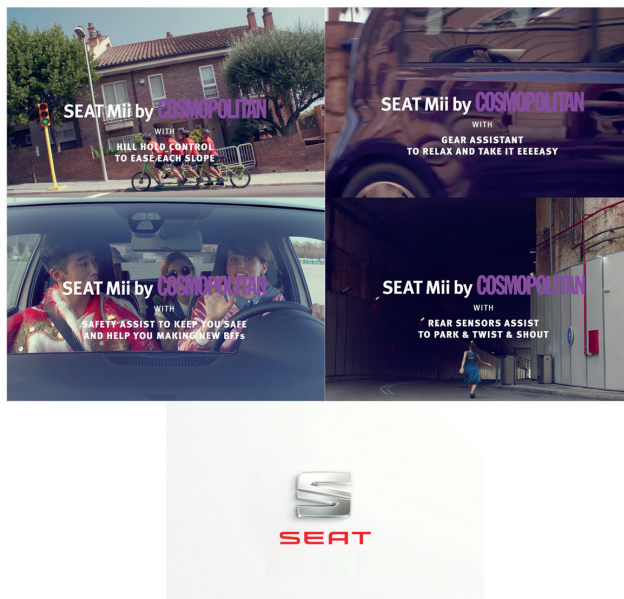
Source: Vimeo of &Rosás

Another of the parameters studied is the car itself, which is present in all the videos in white, or as they call it, *candy white* (31%), and violet, or *violetto* (69%), yet the protagonist is not the car, but instead is the actress. Women are the stars of the twelve videos, as they are the focus of the campaign. In 50% of the videos, a young woman appears alone in the driver's seat of the Mii, and in the other 50% she is accompanied by other female friends. Only in one video, which is the video of the Libra sign, there are men as well. According to the plot, even though they are strangers, the door is left open for them all to become friends.

The main setting used in the videos is the city, as the Mii is a small, easy-to-drive city car. The same locations consistently appear in the videos: a neighbourhood of detached houses, petrol station, car wash, car park, and coastal areas. There is only one non-urban setting, which is a cinema in the video of the Leo sign, yet the location is also related to a lifestyle very much in line with the Cosmopolitan magazine reader and the potential Mii owner.

Figure 11. Screenshots of urban scenes from the #ThisIsMii campaign

Source: Vimeo of &Rosás

In terms of colour and lighting, bright colours are used. Artificial lighting stands out, both for indoor locations as well as for shots inside the car. A very Cosmopolitan visual scene is shown, as it does not appear to be a real image, but rather one that is fantastical. This is the reason why this type of visual treatment is used, which is to accompany these highly caricatured, contradictory situations.

Daytime environments predominate, yet night scenes are also used in order to present different scenarios and actions as shown in Figure 12. Shots taken of the interior and exterior of the vehicle (dashboard, rear seats, etc.) are combined to show the widest range of situations and views of the car, with special emphasis on the differentiating features of this model such as headlights, colours, etc. This is due to the type of woman being targeted, who is active both day and night, and has concerns as well as plans. In short, the focus is on a versatile woman, just like the car, and this is exactly the type of woman being targeted by SEAT.

The medium shot is the most frequently used, which includes shots from inside the car that transmit control, individualism, and proximity to the character. The audio-visual adverts want to make the target audience feel like they are actually driving the car, or at least inside the car.

Figure 12. Screenshots of night scenes from the #ThisIsMii campaign

SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan con opcionales. Consumo: 4.4 a 4.5 l/100 km.
Media emisiones CO$_2$ 83 a 104 g/km

SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan con opcionales. Consumo: 4.4 a 4.5 l/100 km.
Media emisiones CO$_2$ 83 a 104 g/km

Source: Vimeo of &Rosás

Insight is another aspect that has been analysed, and it has to do with the creative concept obtained from the driving experience in which a solution is sought for a problem. A problem appears in all the videos, and the Seat Mii is displayed with an attribute or feature that is able to solve the problem, all of which comes with a cheerful, ironic tone. The copy and accompanying narration are essential in order to understand the message. An example of this is the following two zodiac signs: Leo: "The typical thing is to say that things disappear, fly, and go to another dimension, but you know that they only change places, just like planets. A hook for your headphones, your space helmet, or whatever you prefer"; and Taurus: "Your friends can count on you for a laugh and to go anywhere, but when you're right, you know you're right, and when you're wrong, you're right too. Smartphone integration to go to infinity and beyond". The problem is, they get lost because they want to be right all the time. Thanks to this insight, a feature of the vehicle is presented, which in this case is smartphone integration to allow one to use the vehicle's GPS navigator so they don't get lost.

Attitude is the adjective that defines the personality of each horoscope and is explained in the first part of the results. All of them convey the essence of the Cosmopolitan reader and, consequently, the nature of the potential customer of the vehicle: competitive, sensitive, sociable, confident, unpredictable, resourceful, loyal, original, smart, passionate, meticulous, and tenacious, as the character is presented in the videos.

There are also many accessories from the world of fashion and from the magazine itself: sunglasses, bags, shoes, and even a copy of Cosmopolitan as a nod to the target audience, all of which are integrated into the automotive world. In the Capricorn video, the feature that stands out is the built-in bag hook in the glove compartment.

Figure 13. Screenshots of the fashion and magazine-related accessories in the #ThisIsMii campaign

SEAT Mii by Cosmopolitan con opcionales. Consumo: 4.4 a 4.5 l/100 km.
Media emisiones CO$_2$ 83 a 104 g/km

#ThisIsMii

Source: Vimeo of &Rosás

All the videos speak of emotions and arouse them as well. One example in which the emotional component dominates is the Pisces video, where the protagonist appears with four different looks in the same video in less than 30 seconds. Thanks to this sudden change of wardrobe and hairstyle, the mood swings of the Pisces "sensitivity" are conveyed. All the action takes place inside the car with the actress in the driver's seat of the Mii. In the opening frames, she appears just behind the letters of her sign with her hair loose and straight. She looks doubtful. In the following frames she appears dressed in white with a tiara, looking very sad, and then she suddenly appears with her hair loose and curly, looking like a rocker with a silver jacket, black leather gloves with studs, and glitter in her eyes, somehow being associated with nightlife and partying. This video is dominated by medium shots of the car's interior. The girl is now smiling and enjoying herself behind the wheel. In the final frames, the main character has a more informal appearance, even beachy: tied-up curly hair, blue tank top with yellow trousers, red bracelet, white sunglasses, and blue nails, transporting the spectator to a certain state of tranquility.

Figure 14. Screenshots of the Pisces video

Source: Vimeo of &Rosás

To end this section, it bears mentioning that through the emotions presented in each of the twelve adverts, the aim is to transmit the subjective point of view of the Cosmopolitan reader in a way that is sincere, fresh, and at the same time versatile and full of contradictions.

3.3. #ThisIsMii and the combined use of digital media

The objective of the brand partnership between SEAT and the magazine that belongs to the Hearst International group was to create a limited edition of the Mii car model. They used a combination of undertakings along with digital media in order to advertise a car that was created with the aim of connecting SEAT with today's woman. In the initial phase of the campaign, the new design was implemented by SEAT's creative team in collaboration with regional editors and female readers of Cosmopolitan magazine.

The three main phases of the campaign included a teaser at the beginning of summer 2016, the launch on 16 September 2016, and the purchase promotion from January-March of 2017. The creation of content related to the car for the digital and print versions of the magazine, as well as for the social networks of both brands, was carried out by Cosmopolitan and the &Rosás agency. The Catalan agency suggested themes and set the guidelines for articles and postings for social networks (Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook). With the published content, both SEAT and Cosmopolitan sought the participation of female users through their own profiles on social networks, mostly involving Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

Through an official SEAT UK tweet, Figure 15 shows the launch of the limited edition, presented on 16 September 2016 in London at the #FashFest, organised annually by Cosmopolitan. After its launch, the calendar designed by the creative team was set in motion, and the Horoscope and Fast Food videos described above started to appear.

Source: Twitter and Instagram accounts of Cosmopolitan Spain

The social network campaign kept the same tone as that of the audiovisual clips. The aim was to encourage participation, to show that female users have fun and live without fear and, if possible, to convince them to purchase a Seat Mii by Cosmopolitan, a vehicle with a multitude of extras that will help them personalise their driving experience.

Figure 16. Tweet and post by Cosmopolitan Spain on the premiere of the SEAT Mii

Source: Twitter and Instagram accounts of Cosmopolitan Spain

Humour is the key to the #ThisIsMii campaign on social networks, where small jokes (memes) are made about the world of driving and women, encouraging conversation so that everyone can bring their own point of view without falling into the trap of clichés. Hashtags such as #soycomosoy, #bolsosquepesantoneladas, or #todobajocontrol were created for this purpose and refer to women's own personal experiences as drivers (insights). Figure 17 shows four examples of memes published by Cosmopolitan on Instagram. Due to the specific characteristics of this network, photography is the main ingredient, which stands out for its use of detailed shots and flat, saturated colours to highlight the main elements.

Figure 17. #ThisIsMii campaign memes on Cosmopolitan Spain's Instagram account

Source: Instagram account of Cosmopolitan Spain

3.4. In-depth interview

Victoria Salsas explained that she was in charge of the photography (fast food items for social networks) and the digital strategy of the #ThisIsMii campaign, while the three colleagues from &Rosás were in charge of the audiovisual *capsules*, the name she uses to refer to the horoscope videos. After marketing the SEAT by MANGO two years earlier, the car company sought to take a big leap forward by engaging in "a bigger partnership, leaving behind the world of fashion to immerse itself in the world of lifestyle in partnership with the Hearst Publishing House in order to have more to say, and to have a presence in several markets at the same time".

Likewise, Ms. Salsas also described the process of this 12-month campaign as "doing something with humour and originality" in order to reach a new target audience that is often "forgotten" by the automotive sector, and who have "clear interests that are quite far from simply driving". According to the interviewee, in order to reach this segment SEAT hired the media services of Cosmopolitan and even used the editorial group's own portfolio of influencers "to pay tribute to today's woman".

To launch the car, they used the occasion of Cosmopolitan's Fashfest, the 5-day fashion festival that takes place every year in London. In order to create expectations, Ms.Salsas points out that teasers were created using the "coming soon" strategy. In fact, these were audiovisual productions published on the social network accounts of both Cosmo and SEAT, followed by what are called "memes", which were used to make fun of certain "driving insights" in which the car did not even appear (see Figure 17). In this way, they were able to redirect traffic from Cosmopolitan to SEAT, and vice versa.

The art director describes in detail how the #ThisIsMii concept was created by the &Rosás agency through the production of a specific *video target*, or manifesto aimed at empowering women. With this production, it won the bid created by SEAT for the Mii car model. This hashtag concept is not only used to generate visibility, because in the words of the interviewee, "it is an attitude" through which they wanted to create "a narrative for each feature of the advertised car –ATTITUDE + FUNCTIONALITY– that's the key".

She also stresses that the campaign was envisioned for social media and the digital realm, not only due to the target audience at which the product would be aimed, but because of a budget issue, as the initial budget was reduced to a third, according to Mrs. Salsas.

The target profile is that of an "urban woman", which the art director describes with the following characteristics:

- Feminine, with an interest in beauty and fashion.
- Heath-oriented lifestyle.
- Youthful and modern.

- Unprejudiced.

- Success-oriented.

- Has an active social life, both online and offline.

In deciding the final design of the spots, Mrs. Salsas highlights several qualities of the product, such as "the design of the car, the accessories it offers, and the finishing touches that each user adds". Likewise, emphasis is placed on the importance of the colours, which were chosen by Cosmopolitan's own female readers, and which the magazine's female editors linked to safety, confidence, and determination, thereby ratifying the choice. Among all the colours proposed, two were chosen: purple (violetto) and white (candy white), which are the ones used in the horoscope videos.
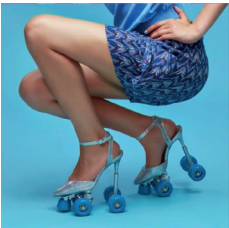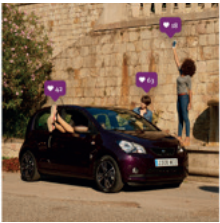
The interviewee states that the colour violetto "was considered attractive and associated with elegance, sophistication and maturity", which is why this colour was later considered to be the product's greatest asset. This was confirmed by carrying out a test of the SEAT Mii car model –the colour was the most highly-rated element and it created surprise among female users. The violetto colour highlighted the importance of the details that had been chosen for this SEAT model, which they identified as "a clearly feminine color". On the other hand, "the interior details and the finish of the wheels create a perception of the car as being of a higher, premium category", Mrs. Salsas added.

During the extensive interview, the aspects to be assessed in the collaboration between Cosmopolitan and SEAT were also determined, as the fashion magazine has several variants. For example, it has a very specific female audience: young women with interests in beauty, fashion, technology, and design trends, who might be categorised as "frivolous", a label with which the brand did not want to associate itself. Therefore, it was thought "that Cosmopolitan should have a secondary role, more related to image and advertising", while at the same time serving as "a platform to launch the campaign and reach the target audience".

As for the chosen communication, it "had to be dynamic with the use of urban settings, and with an emphasis on the character and colour of the vehicle". "The most important aspect of the zodiac videos was the combination of colours, especially the use of violetto and similar shades", says Mrs. Salsas.

On the other hand, Mrs. Salsas states that "the campaign uses everyday situations in the world of fashion and driving as a guide, where women want to look good, have an active social life, and be in control of their driving". The following figure shows examples of these guidelines used for social media posts.

Figure 18. *Guidelines* **for posting memes on Facebook and Instagram**

Facebook	September 19th	When you make an ambitious shoe choice for your night out.	#tonightismynight #mykindofdancingshoes #readytoparty #justrollwithit SEATMiibyCosmo #ThisIsMii @SEAT_local
Instagram	September 22nd		*Mention the SEAT local profile that matches your country. Example: @ cosmopolitanuk would mention @seatuk*

Facebook	September 27th	When you each share your unique view on the same trip.	#filterwars #bringonthelikes #friendlycompetition #thewinnerdrives SEATMiibyCosmo #ThisIsMii @SEAT_local
Instagram	September 30th		*Mention the SEAT local profile that matches your country. Example: @ cosmopolitanuk would mention @seatuk*

| | | Facebook | October 10th | When you have to decide who gets to drive on the way back. | #itsononlyfair #idrivefirst #rockpaperscissors #rockalwayswins SEATMiibyCosmo #ThisIsMii @SEAT_local |
| | | Instagram | October 14th | | |

Mention the SEAT local profile that matches your country. Example: @ cosmopolitanuk would mention @seatuk

<div align="center">Source: SEAT Spain</div>

Finally, the interviewee mentions the most important elements for effective branded content: "create current content in a humorous way to spark their interest and thus connect with the target". She also refers to "the need to create other strategies and initiatives such as the Casa SEAT, a space for culture and getting together, because according to her it is not 'just about selling', but about creating other stronger links with the brand".

<div align="center">**Figure 19. Branded content keys**</div>
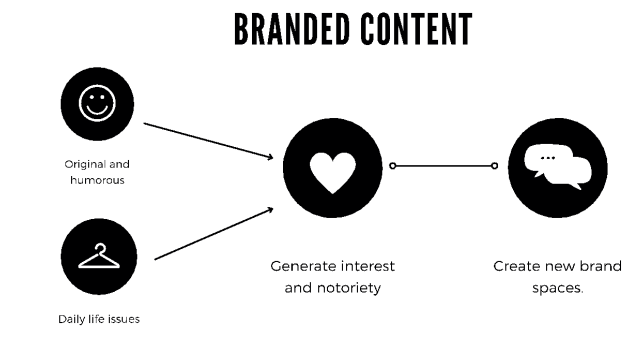
<div align="center">Source: prepared by the authors based on responses from Victoria Salsas</div>

5. Discussion and conclusions

Brands and agencies are constantly looking for new ways to communicate and reach a highly-segmented audience. This is especially difficult for products that require a high level of involvement in the purchase decision, such as that of cars (Chen and Quan, 2021), due to the very nature of the product and because women feel that car brands do not understand them, and that car advertising does not generate appropriate messages that fit with their essence (Marketing Communication News, 2018). Given the importance of the automotive industry (Bonales and Mañas, 2021), car manufacturers must counteract this situation by finding new ways to communicate and reach the female audience by creating content that attracts their attention, because women have the ability to accept or reject the decision to buy this type of product. This is even more true because women are the ones who pay the most attention to advertising (of the 49% of the respondents who say they pay attention to advertising, 70% are women and 30% are men), so it is important to create discourses in line with their interests and expectations.

Following a more international, comprehensive advertisement strategy that combines information, entertainment and advertising (Horrigan, 2009), the Seat Mii car model changed its partnership, moving from the fashion sector (Mango) to the publishing sector (Cosmopolitan, Hearst Publishing House), and it has used the Internet and social networks (Martínez, García and Sendín, 2013) to disseminate its communication, possibly in search of greater reach and coverage in order to approach the female target audience of 18-35 year olds, unknown until now for the automotive sector, but with great potential as possible future customers. This is a commitment that could be seen as risky in the male-dominated world of driving, but the increase in the number of women drivers and car owners is a fact, and women are playing an increasingly important role in the decision to buy these types of products. Moreover,

nowadays women own their own cars, and the Spanish company Seat is one of their favourite brands because of the safety of its vehicles, price, fuel consumption, comfort, and warranty, as stated by the female interviewees in the survey.

Collaboration between brands from different sectors, such as publishing and the automotive industry, increases the visibility of content and diversifies audiences. However, in the case of co-branding, it is important to remember that before developing this type of marketing strategy, the terms of the alliance must be analysed and highly-detailed, because sometimes such an agreement has a certain surprise factor for the final consumer and can go wrong, resulting in a situation that might not be beneficial for one of the parties if either of the brands is tagged with an unwanted label. This is the case of the Cosmopolitan reader being considered possibly "frivolous", and the fatal consequences that might have occurred if this had been associated with SEAT due to the fact that they were co-creating content together.

The &Rosás agency was at the helm of what could be considered the first global branded content campaign aimed at the female audience on the Internet, a project consisting of twenty graphic productions for social networks and twelve audiovisual works. All of this content integrates the values of the SEAT brand (Muller, 2016) and presents the product in a non-invasive way, creating and disseminating quality and diverse content in order to engage potential customers (Cárcar, 2016) by dealing with aspects of everyday life so that the items are more easily recalled by the target audience. To do so, the creative team responsible for this campaign resorted to the various zodiac signs. This creative resource fits very well with Cosmopolitan's style, as it takes into account the great diversity of personalities that exist in the female world and adapts the narrative to this group. The audiovisual items were made by using "driving insights" with a humorous tone and transmitting values associated with the Cosmopolitan brand to the SEAT Mii (glamour, fashion, and femininity), all of which are the fundamental aspects reflected in its content. The Mii is identified as an urban utility vehicle that is lively and agile, which is why the leading Spanish carmaker is targeting young, urban women who belong to the segment of the population that does not yet have family responsibilities. The competitive advantage belonging to SEAT is that female consumers prefer urban models and the SEAT brand (UNESPA, 2017).

Branded content offers a solution to specific needs that SEAT has in eight different markets. This campaign has become widely known but has also had a top-of-mind influence on consumers who belong to a very well-defined market. One idea that was confirmed in the in-depth interview with Victoria Salsas is that branded content must be interesting, as it must transcend into other areas of life, and it must generate branded spaces where other activities take place. The Casa SEAT in Barcelona is a good example of how brands, regardless of the sector to which they belong, should be more committed to consumers and the environment in which they live and not exclusively pursue sales in all of their actions.

Of the main conclusions highlighted by this research, one is the fact that both the Internet and social networks are the best options for offering visibility to content created ad hoc, and especially for the purpose of achieving an objective. In this regard, it is important to create publications with attractive, diverse content that aim to tell unique stories using a diversity of characters that empathise with the user or consumer, and that try to be a mirror of their own reality.

Therefore, storytelling, ideas and emotion are the three main elements that are helping to develop stories that connect with people to obtain measurable results through experiences (Regueira, 2011). Nevertheless, there is a certain sense of urgency to change the conversation related to women and cars. Addressing this target audience in the right way with the proper creative approach could be decisive in being more effective in reaching this target audience, which is becoming more important in the automotive field.

Buying a car is not an activity that is carried out frequently, but when a person is planning to buy a car, this action requires considerable thought, as it is an important financial decision, and because emotion plays a determining role in bringing a buyer closer to a brand. The cars we drive are a reflection of our personality. Not only is it a carefully selected investment that takes us from one place to another, but it defines who we are as well. Brands are aware of this situation, and this is why the messages they have been creating for the last two decades not only highlight the most valued features of a car, but they do so without the product taking centre stage, thereby bringing the brand closer to the consumer in a subtle, non-intrusive way.

For all these reasons, SEAT is taking a step forward in the creation of branded content aimed at women, not only because it has taken this sector into account in the design of the Mii, or because they are the protagonists of the videos, or even because it searches for them in specific print media where it knows they will be found, but also because a well-integrated advertisement campaign in an interactive environment can transform consumer habits (Martínez, García and Sendín, 2013), thereby introducing a new perspective on driving and establishing a renewed viewpoint on cars, which is something that has been quite unusual in Spain, at least until now.

Undoubtedly, a possible future line of research could be the analysis of other branded entertainment campaigns in the automotive industry, as well as the examination of similar content from other sectors aimed at women, with the goal of studying the approach used and how the discourse changes depending on the type of sector and product in question. Likewise, it would also be interesting to analyse the Corporate Social Responsibility actions carried out by the automotive sector for the purpose of promoting culture and solidarity activities such as that of Casa SEAT, or the Citroën Showroom in Paris at 42 Avenue des Champs Elysées. This is an area to which brands should also direct their attention in order to differentiate themselves from competitors, and to search for activities that are in line with the true DNA of their brand.

6. Acknowledgement

7. Bibliographic references

[1] Arbaiza Rodriguez, F. y Huertas García, S. (2018). Comunicación publicitaria en la industria de la moda: branded content, el caso de los fashion films. *Revista de Comunicación*, *17*(1), 9-33.

[2] Arzaluz, S. (2005). La utilización del estudio de caso en el análisis local. *Región y Sociedad*, *17*(32), 107-144. https://dx.doi.org/10.22198/rys.2005.32.a601

[3] Baraybar, A. y De marcos, J. (2018). Nuevas tendencias en la construcción de marcas: una aproximación al storydoing. *Revista Prisma Social, 1*(23), 435-458.

[4] Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

[5] Bonales, G. (2019*). El customer journey en el sector del automóvil: Prioridades en la decisión de compra de los consumidores.* En V. Altamirano, V.; P. P. Marín y A. Dafonte (Eds.), *Nuevos Paradigmas Comunicativos* (pp. 57-71). Editorial Pirámide.

[6] Bonales, G. (2020a). Nuevos criterios/valores dominantes en las creatividades de automóviles en redes sociales. En S. Liberal y L. Mañas (Eds.), *Las Redes Sociales como herramienta de comunicación persuasiva* (pp. 401-412). Nueva York: McGraw Hill.

[7] Bonales, G. (2020b). *La transformación de la comunicación publicitaria del sector del automóvil en los años 2007-2018: Del auge de Internet a la prescripción con IoT.* Tesis Doctoral, Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

[8] Bonales, G. (2021). *Análisis iconográfico de la publicidad automovilística en Internet*. Madrid: Editorial Fragua.

[9] Bonales Daimiel, G. y Mañas Viniegra, L. (2021). Evolución de la inversión publicitaria durante la década de crisis económica (2007-2018). El caso del sector del automóvil y su adaptación al medio Internet. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación, 12*(2), 227-243. https://dx.doi.org/10.14198/MEDCOM.18155

[10] Cárcar, J. (2016) Una aproximación al transmedia, el storytelling y los nuevos modelos narrativos electorales en la comunicación política actual. *MARCO, Marketing y Comunicación Política, 2*(01), 89-110. http://dx.doi.org/10.15304/marco.2.2904

[11] Castillo-Abdul, B.; Bonilla-del-Río, M. & Núñez-Barriopedro, E. (2021). Influence and Relationship between Branded Content and the Social Media Consumer Interactions of the Luxury Fashion Brand Manolo Blahnik. *Publications, 9*(1). https://dx.doi.org/10.3390/publications9010010

[12] Chen L. & Quan X. (2021). Something social, something entertaining? How digital content marketing augments consumer experience and brand loyalty. *International Journal of Advertising, 40*(3), 376-402. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2020.1788311

[13] Del-Pino-Romero, C. y Castelló-Martínez, A. (2015). La comunicación publicitaria se pone de moda: branded content y fashion films. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación, 6*(1), 105-128. https://dx.doi.org/10.14198/MEDCOM2015.6.1.07

[14] Del-Pino-Romero, C.; Castelló-Martínez, A. y Ramos-Soler, I. (2013). *La comunicación en cambio constante*. Madrid: Fragua.

[15] Ellet, W. (2007). *The Case Study Handbook: How to Read, Write and Discuss Persuasively about Cases.* EE. UU.: Harvard Business School Press.

[16] Garvin, D. A. (2003). Making the Case: Professional Education for the World of Practice. *Harvard Magazine, 106*(1), 56-107. https://bit.ly/2UlOMZt

[17] Horrigan, D. (2009). Branded content: a new model for driving Tourism via film and branding strategies. *Tourismos: an international multidisciplinary refereed journal of tourism, IV*(3), 51-65.

[18] IAB Spain. (2020a). *Inversión Publicitaria en Medios Digitales. Resultados 2019*. IAB Spain.

[19] IAB Spain. (2020b). *Estudio de redes sociales 2020*. IAB Spain.

[20] IAB Spain. (2021). *Inversión Publicitaria en Medios Digitales. Resultados 2020*. IAB Spain.

[21] Imbert, G. (2003). El zoo visual. De la televisión espectacular a la televisión especular. Barcelona: Gedisa.

[22] Infoadex (2019). Info ío/Mosaico. Disponible en https://tinyurl.com/y6vtar3a

[23] Levitt, T. (2007). Los mejores artículos de Tedd Levitt sobre marketing. Barcelona: Ediciones Deusto.

[24] Lou, C.; Xie, Q.; Feng, Y. & Kim, W. (2019). Does non-hard-sell content really work? Leveraging the value of branded content marketing in brand building. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 28(7), 773-786. https://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-07-2018-1948

[25] Marketing Communication News. (2018). Women believe the automotive brands don't understand them, according to TI Media. *Marketing Communication News*. https://bit.ly/3jqyPym

[26] Martín-Guart, R. y Fernández, J. (2014). La Publicidad y la Agencia de Medios Frente al Cambio en el Ecosistema Mediático. *Cuadernos.info, 34*, 13-25. https://dx.doi.org/10.7764/cdi.34.572

[27] Martínez, E.; García, A. y Sendín, J. C. (2013). Percepción de los riesgos en la red por los adolescentes en España: Usos problemáticos y formas de control. *Anàlisi: Quaderns De Comunicació i Cultura,* 48, 111-130. https://dx.doi.org.bucm.idm.oclc.org/10.7238/a.v0iM.1969

[28] Miotto, G. y Payne, G. (2019). Branded content: una nueva apuesta para el New York Times. *adComunica. Revista Científica de Estrategias, Tendencias e Innovación en Comunicación*, (17), 23-39. https://dx.doi.org/10.6035/2174-0992.2019.17.3

[29] Mir, P. (2016). *Brand.com: reputación de marcas y social media*. Pamplona: Eunsa.

[30] Muller, K. (2016). El papel de las marcas en la nueva era de la comunicación publicitaria. *Opcion*, 32(12), 39–65.

[31] Pedroni, M. (2013). The Crossroad between Production and Consumption: An Introduction to Fashion as a Cultural Industry. En M. L. Pedroni (Ed.), *From production to consumption: The cul-tural industry of fashion* (pp. VII- XLVII). Oxford, UK: Inter-Disciplinary Press.

[32] Pérez, A. (2012). SEAT Mii, el compañero perfecto para la movilidad urbana. *Autonoción*. https://bit.ly/2UZwAZo

[33] Pineda, A.; Pérez de Algaba Chicano, C. y Hernández-Santaolalla, V. (2013). La ficción como publicidad: análisis semiótico-narrativo del "corporate advertainment". Área Abierta, 13(3), 67-91. https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/rev_ARAB.2013.v34.n3.43354

[34] Regueira, J. (2011). *Big Brother is dead. El día que el consumidor hizo callar a las marcas*. Madrid: Esic.

[35] Rogel del Hoyo, C. y Marcos Molano, M. (2020). El branded content como estrategia (no) publicitaria. *Pensar la publicidad, 14*(1), 65-75. https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/pepu.68369

[36] Scolari, C. A. (2012). Comunicación digital. Recuerdos del futuro. *El profesional de la información, 21*(4), 337-340. https://dx.doi.org/10.3145/epi.2012.jul.01

[37] Ramos-Serrano, M. y Pineda-Cachero, A. (2009). El advertainment y las transformaciones de los formatos en el ámbito publicitario: el caso de los fashion films. *Trípodos Extra*, 2, 729-737.

[38] Taylor, S. J. y Bogdan, R. (1987). *Introducción a los métodos cualitativos de investigación. La búsqueda de significados*. Barcelona: Paidós.

[39] Toffler, A. (1980). *La tercera ola*. Barcelona: Plaza & Janés.

[40] Tur-Viñes, V. y Segarra-Saavedra, J. (2014). «Branded content» y «storytelling». El arte de crear contenidos y contar historias. En R. Ron; A. Álvarez y P. Núñez, (Coords.), *Bajo la influencia del branded content* (pp. 117-136). Madrid: Esic Editorial.

[41] UNESPA. (2017). *Informe "Y tú, ¿qué conduces?"*. Unión Española de Entidades Aseguradoras y Reaseguradoras. Asociación Empresarial del Seguro. https://tinyurl.com/yjmtqf4f

[42] UNESPA. (2019). *Informe "Estamos Seguros"*. Unión Española de Entidades Aseguradoras y Reaseguradoras -Asociación Empresarial del Seguro. https://tinyurl.com/yjmtqf4f

[43] Van Meter, K. (1990). Methodological and design issues: techniques for assessing the representatives of snowball samples. *Collection and Interpretation of Data From Hidden Populations,* 98, 31-43. https://bit.ly/3wU7uK5

Dr. Isabel PALOMO-DOMÍNGUEZ
Mykolas Romeris University. Lituania. isabel@estudiopalabra.com. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2096-7422

Dr. Fernando INFANTE-DEL-ROSAL
University of Sevilla. Spain. finfante@us.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8146-3207

Analytical review on the legality of branded content in MasterChef España

Revisión crítica sobre la legalidad del branded content en MasterChef España

Abstract

MasterChef Spain is a tv-programme on Radiotelevisión Española, the state public medium, which operates under a specific financing law. This law prohibits advertising and permits the use of sponsorship only within specific limits. Since the programme began in 2013, brands with advertising interest have appeared in it, frequently masked in hybrid formats such as branded content. Our research considers whether these brands exceed the legal limits of sponsorship, leading to examples of covert advertising, another illegal practice. Methodologically, we combine documentary research with content analysis. The results describe the advertising representation and relevance of these brands. In turn, they provide evidence on the existence of advertising contracts in MasterChef that justify the promotion of certain institutions through the branded content format, a new infraction since paid institutional advertising is not permitted on Radiotelevisión Española. The original contributions are the specific analysis instrument to question the legality of branded content on public television in Spain and the documentary evidence of the contracts. Among the study's limitations, we consider the problematic access to private brands accounts; this would open a new line of research in which we would seek advertising contracts for private brands present in MasterChef.

Resumen

MasterChef España se emite en Radiotelevisión Española, medio público estatal que se rige por una ley de financiación específica. Dicha ley prohíbe la publicidad y solo permite el patrocinio dentro de unos límites descritos. Desde su comienzo en 2013, el programa incluye marcas con interés publicitario, frecuentemente enmascaradas en formatos híbridos como el branded content. El objetivo de este artículo es constatar que tales marcas exceden los límites legales del patrocinio cultural o deportivo, desembocando en ejemplos de publicidad encubierta, otra práctica también sancionada. Metodológicamente, se combina la investigación documental con el análisis de contenido. Los resultados describen la presentación publicitaria de estas marcas. Asimismo, se demuestra la existencia de contratos publicitarios que dan pie a la promoción de instituciones a través del formato del branded content. Este hecho supone una nueva infracción, pues la publicidad institucional pagada también está prohibida en Radiotelevisión Española. Son contribuciones originales el diseño de un instrumento de análisis para cuestionar la legalidad del branded content en este medio y la identificación de licitaciones y contratos. Entre las limitaciones del estudio, se hallan las dificultades de acceso a las cuentas de marcas privadas. Este aspecto abriría una futura línea de investigación, centrada en la búsqueda de contratos publicitarios de marcas privadas en MasterChef.

1. Introduction

MasterChef is a gastronomic television programme based on the formula described by Ketchum (2005) as an *avant garde food show*. It is a talent show with a touch of tv reality, in which contenders who have been selected in a previous casting compete against each other under the assessment of a jury (Abdala and Andacht, 2018; Curnutt, 2016).

British in origen, this format has been adapted to over 50 different local media markets (Hogan, 2017; Rodríguez, 2015). In Spain, the programme is produced by Radiotelevisión Española (hereinafter, RTVE) [1], in collaboration with the producer Shine Iberia [2]. From its first edition in 2013, it has beaten ratings records which has enabled it to consolidate its continuance on air [3].

In order to be broadcast within the context of state public television, *MasterChef Spain* (hereinafter MCE) is subject to Law 8/2009, of 28th of August, on the Financing of the Spanish Radiotelevision Corporation (hereinafter, LFCRTVE) which forbids advertising as a means of income for this public media. It only permits funding from brands which participate as sponsors whether these be cultural or sporting events.

The main objective of this research is to show the presence of brands with advertising interests on MCE which exceed the limits of cultural sponsorship which would mean this law has been violated. In turn, we will analyse how the narrative mechanism of branded content operates in this programme. Branded content is understood as a hybrid strategy consisting in promotional messages are blended with entertainment contents. This creates a kind of confusion which leads to covert advertising and encourages lax application of the regulation.

The specific objectives (hereinafter SO) are described as:

SO1 to analyse and measure the impact of brands shown by branded content.

SO2 to become acquainted with the regulations and clarify their limits.

SO3 to review precedents in case law relating to this.

SO4 to research whether there are contracts between the promoted brands and MCE.

The aim of this study is to demonstrate the hypothesis that MCE repeatedly infringes the regulation on advertising and sponsorship with total impunity. For this purpose, the research provides an analysis instrument with which the presence of these brands can be described and evaluated. Also, documentary evidence of advertising contracts which infringe the law are also provided.

We understand that this is an important contribution, in a field worth researching. This is especially true within the context of the public media, which presupposes must provide a public service and has a commitment to being an example of ethical conduct. Also, the research coincides with the designation in 2021 of José Manuel Pérez Tornero as chairman of RTVE, who announced an open consultation to redefine the future of the corporation and make it "more integrated, more coherent and more participatory" (Europa Press, 2021).

It is hoped that the contributions the research has made are helpful for improving the funding system for radio and television broadcasting in Spain, nurturing a situation in which the interests of the media, producers, advertisers and the public are taken into consideration. In turn, this study aims to broaden knowledge of hybrid formats and transmedia strategies, so that integrating brands and contents creates attractive media products. There is an analysis of the form they may take without implying any violation of the rights of the audience, especially, in terms of the public media.

1.1. Legal framework

As stated before, the LFCRTVE establishes that:

> Sponsorship and advertising of cultural and sporting events is permitted which is within the bounds of the mission of public service the corporation provides, which is not commercial, and providing that this system is the only possibility of disseminating and producing them (art. 7.1).

Even though it might go without saying, it stresses that the law does not fully accept sponsorship in a broad sense. That is, as a marketing communication tool with a direct, clear and obvious commercial intention (Capriotti, 2007; Johnston and Spais, 2015; Lin and Bruning, 2021). Instead, the LFCRTVE sets limits and merely enables a type of cultural and sports sponsorship in which the following conditions are met:

- which are not commercial;

- which are aimed at cultural or sports events;

- which are in keeping with the duties of public service which has been attributed to the RTVE, corporation included in Law 17/2006 (art. 3.2) and covered by LFCRTVE (art. 9.1).

The LFCRTVE also envisages other activities permitted which "are not deemed to be advertising" and which "if carried out will not give rise to any financial gain". Among these are institutional advertising and communication (art. 7.3).

The first consequence of the LFCRTVE was the redistribution of the Spanish advertising market. This created a need to adapt all programming and broadcasting to the new regulatory framework (Jiménez-Marín, Polo and Jódar-Marín, 2012; Jivkova-Semova, 2011; Muñoz, 2015; Ojer, 2011; Ortiz, 2010). However, it may seem that RTVE has merely replaced the term, "advertising" with "cultural sponsorship" since the public media continues to be paid significant amounts of money in return for providing visibility to advertised brands (Escudero, 2019). This way, a low cost audiovisual production model has been established in which there are attempts to create programmes at zero cost, funded by brands which cannot be deemed as cultural sponsors (Heredero and Reyes, 2016). This is frequently reported on in the general press, with headlines such as the following ones taken from the newspapers *La Información* and *Sur*:

> "*MasterChef*: advertising returns to TVE (without realising)". (Terán, 2015).

> "RTVE has earned almost 92 million euros in 'advertising' since it stopped advertising. *MasterChef* is the hen which laid the golden egg" (Villarreal, 2019).

1.2. Branded content in *MasterChef Spain*

Branded content, which some authors define as "covert advertising in entertainment contents" (Ron, Álvarez and Núñez, 2014: 24), is an alternative corporate communication format, which has become ever more popular as a supplement or replacement of traditional communication practices. Castelló-Martínez and Del Pino-Romero (2014) explain that this trend corresponds to the need for advertising interests to adapt, which strives to survive in a rapidly changing media world subject to new rules.

Branded content is defined as a set of actions which incorporate elements of a brand (values, philosophy, identity) into different types of contents and by means of different formats or tools (Formoso-Barro, Sanjuán and Martínez-Costa, 2016; Ramos-Serrano, 2006). In branded content, the brand message merges with the communicative flow of culture, information, or entertainment and makes up a continuum. That is, the brand becomes part of the main message; it is not an accessory, annoying, nor even something that can be put to one side or differentiated (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016; Halligan and Shan, 2014; Hardy, 2021; MacRury, 2017).

Hidalgo-Marí and Segarra-Saavedra (2013: 321) stress that the role of branded content in promoting brands within the gastronomy context. They also emphasise that this formula "also enables the legendary crisis in public sector television, media saturation, as well as the regulatory laws themselves on advertising contents on television to all be evaded".

In light of this description, branded content is presented as an advantageous format for MCE, a televisual space for cooking in which advertising on a public media is strictly forbidden. In fact, although cultural sponsorship is the legal formula which covers the brands contained in the programme, MCE has a closer relationship with them. This surpasses the boundaries of what we understand to be cultural sponsorship and results in branded content (Segarra-Saavedra and Hidalgo-Marí, 2014). This way, the brands embrace the philosophy of the programme, project their CSR and associate their values with those of MCE (Gallardo, Jiménez-Marín and Elías, 2018).

This reality can be illustrated with the example of the ham producer brand Navidul (see image 1), included on the website of the specialist publication *Marketing Directo* and explained by Miguel Bartolomé, project manager from the agency Zenith NewCast

> a branded content project, which provides content and simultaneously enables interaction with the brand [...]. So, we were on the special Christmas edition of Masterchef on 23rd of December [...]. Their *Master Classes* were given by big-name chefs [...] four minutes of *Master Class* on *Prime Time* on TVE, on the most watched programme, in which the ham Navidul was centre-stage.

> ("Navidul sneaks onto the *MasterChef* kitchens with a new strategy", 2015).

Source: shot of programme (Escorial and Sanz, 2014).

In turn, branded content encourages a transmedia strategy to be created (Du Plessis, 2019; Jakus and Zub□i□, 2016; Jenkins, 2010). As can be seen in MCE, the commercial and persuasive nature of the format is such that it does not exceed the physical limits of the set. It is broadcast by means of other media (such as social networks and public relations events). In addition, there are even sales channel, with in-house brands (oils, wines, recipe books…) and the gastronomy experience of the programme is recreated in the *MasterChef* [4], restaurant, a physical space which constitutes a new example of branded content (Álvarez, 2020).

1.3. The only case of a sanctioned branded content in *MasterChef Spain*

Since MCE began broadcasting from 2013 and to date, RTVE has only been sanctioned once on account of covert advertising made on this programme. To be specific, this occurred in reference to an off-site test. It concerned the test shot at González Byass wineries, broadcast on 18th of May 2016, on the seventh programme of the fourth series (hereinafter, MCE 4 P7[5]).

The Secretariat of the Council for the National Commission of Markets and Competition (hereinafter, CNMC) resolved the following, in text SNC/DTSA/030/16/CRTVE:

> CRTVE is deemed responsible for a continuous administrative infringement of a serious nature according to article 58.8 of Law 7/2010, of 31st March, on General Audiovisual Communication (hereinafter, LGCA) for having broadcast on the national channel LA 1, covert advertising from the brand "González Byass wineries" and their products […].

> CRTVE was fined the amount of 219.342€ (two hundred and nineteen thousand, three hundred and forty-two euros), in application of that set out in article 60.2 of Law 7/2010, of 31st of March, on General Audiovisual Communication (CNMC, 2016: 23-24).

The fine according to the CNMC was based on the following verifications (see image 2):

> Appearance on the upper left hand side of the screen of the banner "Tío Pepe Wineries, Jerez de la Frontera, González Byass" […].

> The demonstrations made for and by the contenders using the *venencia*[6], made in front of a barrel from Tío Pepe from González Byass, with the brand clearly visible in the foreground […].

> Wine tasting at the winery […] during which the different wine brands from González Byass were mentioned expressly […].

> The responsable staff at the winery were clearly identified on screen with the name of the parent company of the brand on a banner on the screen (e.g. A.F, enologist from González Byass and Master Blender) […].

> The wine brand "Beronia" from González Byass was promoted by using barrels from this brand for the tables for the country barbeque prepared by the contenders […] (CNMC, 2016: 5-6).

Image 2: Branded content sancioned on MCE 4 P7

Source: shots of programme (Escorial and Sanz, 2016).

This off-site test lasted almost an hour (from 0:52:00 to 1:44:00) and is a clear example of branded content. Despite being fined, the whole programme was available to see on the online platform of the public media until 2021, five years after it was broadcast [7].

2. Methodology

The objective of this study is to analyse the presence of brands on MCE [8], observed from a legal point of view, especially, those cases in which brands are shown by means of branded content. To tackle this, the following corpus was delimited which was made up of 20 programmes (N=20):

- The full series of MCE 6, broadcast in 2018 (13 programmes). This series was chosen for analysis as it coincided with a change in the Spanish government, in which the People´s Party (PP), was ousted by their adversaries, the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE). This event provides the opportunity to observe whether such a change has influenced the criteria of Corporation RTVE or not in terms of the inclusion of sponsored brands.

- There is also a selection of seven programmes belonging to other series, from MCE 1 to MCE 8, covering the period from 2013 to 2020. This enables any trends to be seen and to assess whether the results obtained from an analysis of MCE 6 is representative of MCE overall. In order to keep the criteria normalised in all series, programme number 7 was chosen. This number is preferred because it was in MCE 4 P7 when González Byass winery appears, which is essential to our study.

Within this study corpus, there will be a special focus on the results related to the off-site tests, as this is the stage of the programme where the branded content format continuously appears.

Regarding the methodology, this was a combination of documentary research with content analysis. The latter is a technique which has been broadly consolidated within the field of communication (Herring, 2004). Within this methodological approach, it is worth mentioning the work by Martí-Parreño (2011), who proposed a tool for content analysis for product placement. From this reference point, an analysis sheet was drawn up especially for MCE, with nine categories and a numerical values scale. This enables the advertising significance of the brands displayed to be measured, as well as to describe other hybrid formats, especially those of branded content.

The sheet contains a total of 36 variables, grouped into the following batches:

- Analysis unit (B): identifies each study unit and specifies at what time and section of the programme it is added.

- Brand data (C): provides information about the advertiser, regarding the brand, sector and owner.

- Value (D): these variables describe the way in which the brand appears. As a whole, the degree of advertising significance is measured by means of this values scale. On this scale three levels can be distinguished, from 1 to 3 in a rising order (see table 1).

- Dichotomic (E): used to analyse key points related to legality. That is, whether the brand appearances are intentional or not, whether they are of advertising interest, whether they are related to the duties of public service of the media or whether they are related to promoting culture (see table 2).

- Coments (F): is an open field variable for collecting points of interest which enable a more qualitative reflection.

Table 1: Value variables

Variables	Categories	Value
D#1: Category	D#1#1: Visual (the brand is only perceived by means of the sense of sight) D#1#2: Auditive (only by means of hearing) D#1#3: Audiovisual (by sight and hearing)	1 2 3
D#2: Proximity	D#2#1: Focal (the brand appears in the first term or is emphasised) D#2#2: Peripheral (appears in the background)	3 1
D#3: Visual encoding	D#3#1: Titles/banners of text (included in post-production) D#3#2: Logotype (in the scene shot) D#3#3: Corporative visual elements or products (in the scene shot)	1 3 2
D#4: Auditive encoding	D#4#1: On-screen D#4#2: Off-screen D#4#3: Indirect reference (the brand is not named but it is recognised) D#4#4: Advertising theme music (highlights the presence of the brand)	3 1 1 2
D#5: Status of the person mentioning the brand	D#5#1: Presenter D#5#2: Jury D#5#3: Contenders D#5#4: VIP (chefs and famous people who come onto the programme) D#5#5: Others	3 3 2 3 1
D#6: Degree of integration	D#6#1: On screen presence (the brand is part of the scene) D#6#2: Presence in the script (the brand fulfils a role in the narrative)	1 3
D#7: Narrative significance (only applies if D#6#2)	D#7#1: Low (if the brand is named as an accessory) D#7#2: Average (it is necessary in the course of a test) D#7#3: High (it is centre-stage)	1 2 3
D#8: Diegetic connection	D#8#1: Diegetic (the brand is part of the programme narrative) D#8#2: Non-diegetic	3 1
D#9: Interaction with the brand	D#9#1: There is (a person values the brand, uses their products...) D#9#2: There is none	3 0

	D#10#1: Presenter	3
D#10: Status of the character who is interacting with it	D#10#2: Jury	3
	D#10#3: Contenders	2
	D#10#4: VIP	3
	D#10#5: Others	1
D#11: Exposure time of brand	D#11#1: Seconds (open field) D#11#2: Up to 10 seconds D#11#3: From 11 to 30 seconds D#11#4: Over 30 seconds	1 2 3

Levels of persuasive significance according to the total score:
D#12#1: Level 1, up to 15 points (low significance)
D#12#2: Level 2, from 16 to 30 points (average significance)
D#12#3: Level 3, over 30 points (high significance)

Source: prepared by the authors

Table 2: Dichotomic variables

Variables	Value
E#1: Public service	E#1#1: Yes (the brand appearance helps fulfil the duties of public service defined for the CRTVE) E#1#2: No
E#2: Cultural value	E#2#1: Yes (the appearance of the brand promotes culture) E#2#2: No
E#3: Advertising interest	E#3#1: Yes (the brand shows interest in advertising yields) E#3#2: No
E#4: Intentional presence	E#4#1: Yes (the programme intentionally shows the brand) E#4#2: No
E#5: Hidden brand	E#5#1: Yes (the brand is either partially or totally hidden) E#5#2: No

Source: prepared by the authors

3. Results

3.1. General results

In the full corpus of the study (N=20) there is a fixed and stable structure on MCE, which has been maintained throughout all the series. The main sections of each programme are the three tests: two of which are carried out on set (the initial and elimination test); unlike the off-site test, which is the middle of the programme. It is in the off-site test where the most significant cases of branded content are recorded although this formula can also be seen in other sections of the programme.

Observing the number of units analysed, the format of the most recurring brands which appear on MCE is product placement. In fact, out of the 2,987 units analysed on MCE 6 (N=13), 2,652 corresponded to brands shown by product placement. Other formats are spokesperson recommendation, sponsors tv commercial, banners, internal promotional spots and branded content (see graph 1, on the left). The latter is the format with the highest incidence on the programme if we bear in mind the time the brands are on display. This is related to the inherent nature of branded content which, given its narrative character, is usually presented for a longer duration [9]. Therefore, in the 33,955 seconds counted with brands present on MCE 6 (N=13), 23,695 seconds (over 6 hours) show examples of branded content (see graph 1, on the right).

Likewise, branded content is the format which provides greatest advertising significance for the brands displayed (level 3), in accordance with the sum of the categories fulfilled in the variables value. In fact, as seen in graph 2, over half of the units which reached level 3 of advertising significance on MCE 6 are cases of branded content.
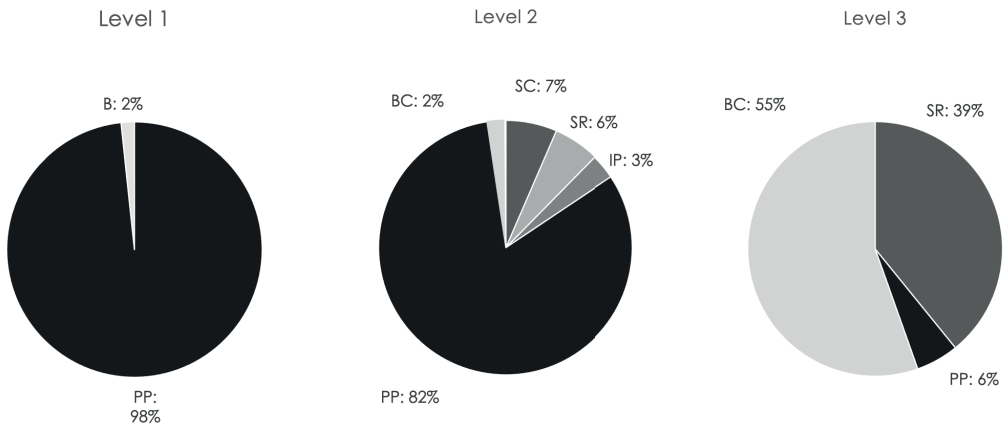
Graph 1: Incidence of formats on MCE 6
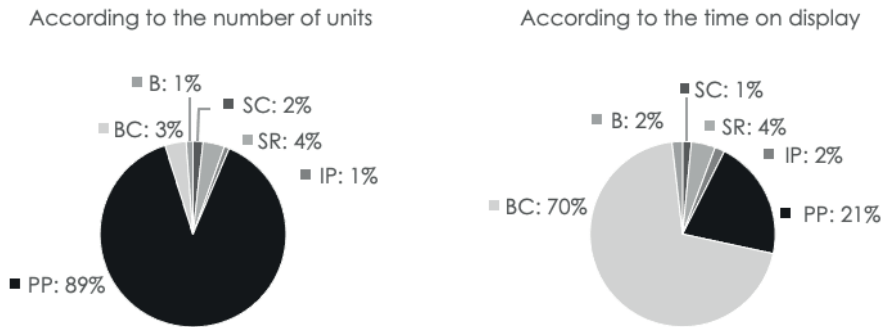
According to the number of units

According to the time on display

PP (*product placement*); B (banners); BC (*branded content*); SC (sponsors TV commercial);
SR (spokesperson recommendation); IP (internal promotional spots).

Source: prepared by the authors

Graph 2: Percentage of units of each format in the different levels of advertising significance

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

PP (*product placement*); B (banners); BC (*branded content*); SC (sponsors TV commercial);
SR (spokesperson recommendation); IP (internal promotional spots).

Source: prepared by the authors

Apart from the cultural sponsors of MCE, the supermarket El Corte Inglés and the electrodomestics company, Bosch [10], the variety of brands displayed on the programme is plentiful, and a total of 183 different ones were registered over the full series of MCE 6 (see table 3).

Table 3: Category of brands on MCE 6 according to sector

Products categories	Number of brands	Percentage
Hotel & Catering	65	31.7%
Culture & Performance	11	8.3%
Food & Drinks	13	6.3%
Household items & Electrodomestics	11	5.4%
Sport	9	4.4%
Tourism & Transport	8	3.9%
Training	6	2.9%
Publishing	5	2.4%
Child and family leisure	2	1%
Large distribution	1	0.5%
Other: fashion, government, health and defence	52	25.4%

Source: prepared by the authors

As can be seen on graph 3, in the dichotomic variables, the vast majority of the units analysed correspond to brands which do not provide a public service (E#1#2) and lack any cultural value (E#2#2). Moreover, they have a clear advertising interest (E#3#1), as well as a desire to appear on the programme (E#4#1), against which there is no mechanism for hiding the brand (E#5#2).

Graph 3: Dichotomic variables in the analysed units on MCE 6
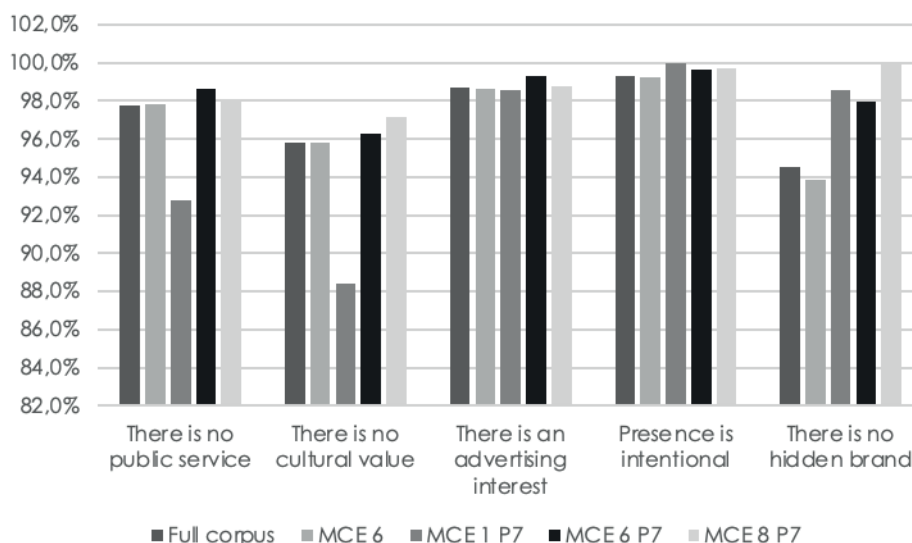
Source: prepared by the authors

The cases of branded content (are scant, if we consider the number of units but outstanding in terms of the time the brand is on display) are those which are most concentrated in the presence of brands related to public service and cultural interest. This can be seen in table 4 where the number of units of branded content related to public service and those providing cultural value are shown. On the same table the time on display is expressed (in seconds) and, finally, the percentage these seconds account for is calculated in comparison to total programme time where the categories of contribution to public service (E#1#1) and cultural value(E#2#1) are given associated with the brands.

Table 4: Incidence of the branded content format in the variables of public service and cultural value

Prog.	Cross tabulation of Branded content x Public service			Cross tabulation of Branded content x Cultural value		
	Number of units	Seconds of exposition	% exposure by programme	Number of units	Seconds of exposition	% exposure by programme
P1	1	514	91.9%	1	514	74.6%
P2	3	952	99.0%	8	1317	96.0%
P3	1	563	91.4%	2	833	95.4%
P4	1	230	79.6%	2	1542	97.4%
P5	2	360	84.1%	3	1681	97.1%
P6	2	712	94.4%	3	1097	95.1%
P7	1	310	91.4%	4	1732	96.6%
P8	1	570	92.4%	2	525	92.1%
P9	1	701	92.4%	4	705	92.2%
P10	2	865	92.2%	4	1431	96.8%
P11	1	662	92.7%	3	1242	96.7%
P12	0	0	0.0%	7	1727	97.7%
P13	1	1005	93.2%	3	3095	97.4%

Source: prepared by the authors

Due to the comparison with the programmes selected with the other series, it can be stated that in all points dealt with, the results obtained in the analysis of MCE 6 (N=13) have been extrapolated to the reality observed on MCE from 2013 to 2020 (N=20).

3.2. Results in the off-site tests

The brands shown in the off-site tests are generally tourist destinations and institutions which act as hosts for filming the test. There are also plenty of private companies in sectors such as hotel and catering, performances, sport or fashion, amongst others. These brands are not identified on the programme as cultural sponsors. Instead, they are mentioned at the end of the programme in a banner of text under the title "Acknowledgements". In this way, the role these brands play is not clear, as it is not known whether they have provided funding, or, have just helped with the filming.

The off-site tests are characterised by providing a very similar treatment to the brands involved, which are considered in batches to demonstrate the narrative cohesion which binds them. This uniformity stands out especially in what is referred to as the variables value. On all the programmes, the batch of brands in the off-site test is shown with the same branded content format (B#4#4), which takes centre stage in the script of the test (D#6#2 y D#7#3) and lasts far more than 30 seconds (D#11#4).

This is carried out in the audiovisual category (D#1#3), with plenty of visual elements which identify the brands; whether this is by titles (D#3#1) and logotypes (D#3#2), or with products and corporate elements from them (D#3#3). The brands are also mentioned both on screen (D#4#1) and off screen (D#4#2). Likewise, extradiegetic shots are added (D#8#2) which promote the brands even more. Moreover, interaction is guaranteed (D#9#1) between these brands and presenter, jury, contenders and guests. Given this description of all the programmes in the corpus analysed, the batch of brands in the off-site tests seems to be represented at the highest level of significance (level 3, over 30 points).

As for the dichotomic variables, the advertising interest of the brands (E#3#1), the intention behind the programme when showing them (E#4#1) and the lack of hiding mechanisms for these brands (E#5#2) have been kept as constants. However, according to what the brands are that make up the batches, at times a vocation for public service is identified (E#1#1) or not (E#1#2), as well as the presence of cultural

value (E#2#1) or lack of it (E#2#2). This point is closely related to brand ownership: in the institutions contribution to public service is usually what stands out; in private brands, it is the link to culture.

In general, the off-site tests contain a balance of public and private brands. In the sample, on MCE 6, we can see graph 4, on whose vertical axis the number of brands per batch and ownership is distinguished by colour code. We can also see this in the comparison made with the other series (see table 5).

Graph 4: Brand ownership in the off-site tests in MCE6
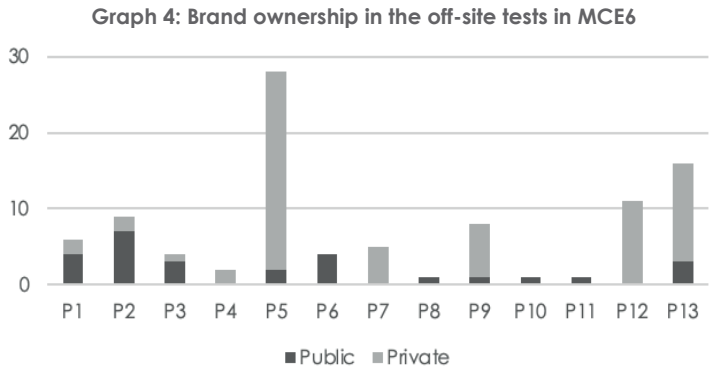
Source: prepared by the authors

Table 5: Batch of brand ownership in the off-site tests in P7 in MCE

Series and programme	Batch of brands in off-site test	Public brands only	Private brands only	Public and private brands
MCE 1 P7	Luxury hotels in Madrid		X	
MCE 2 P7	Toledo & Art Experts			X
MCE 3 P7	Tenerife & Cooks/Local Restaurants			X
MCE 4 P7	González Byass		X	
MCE 5 P7	Menorca & Cooks/Local Restaurants			X
MCE 6 P7	Atlético de Madrid & Wanda Metropolitano		X	
MCE 7 P7	Pedraza & Catering Samantha de España			X
MCE 8 P7	Higher Council of Sports and Centre for High Performance	X		

Source: prepared by the authors

3.2.1. Off-site tests with public and private brands

As induced in the analysed corpus, in MCE off-site tests are predominantly those which combine privately and publically owned brands. In these cases, public brands are typically used as a context to carry out the test (local administration, tourist institutions, regulatory bodies for local products...). From these places, private brands are promoted. By way of example, the analysis of the off-site tests on MCE 6 P2 and MCE 6 P13 was provided.

The first of these was carried out in the Galician town of Baiona, specifically in the *Parador*[11]. On table 6 the list can be seen. The recount and classification of all the brands represented is displayed as well as the categories fulfilled in the dichotomic variables. In the test on the whole shots of the landscape and buildings with large tourist appeal predominated, where Baiona and its Parador were identified with titles added in postproduction and logotypes in the scene (see image 3, upper row).

One excerpt stands out in which the presenter looks for a testimonial from one of the diners identified by a title as "Carlos Gómez, owner of Adegas Valmiñor" (see image 3, lower row, right). In a dialogue, the

cultural message about the designation of origin of the wine and covert advertising of a private brand is combined by means of hybridisation (from 1:19:14):

> Presenter: You have spectacular, gourmet gastronomy. Well, not just the gastronomy, but the wines are very good too, eh.

> Winery owner: Spectacular, truth be told is that Rias Baixas go perfectly with the dishes.

Table 6: Off-site tests in MCE 6 P2. Batch of brands Baiona & Parador

Brands cited in Acknowledgments	Brands on screen during the test	
Pontevedra Council Rías Baixas Tourism Baiona Parador Nigrán Council Adegas Valmiñor Esc. CIPF Hotel and Catering Carlos Oroza	Pontevedra Council Rías Baixas Tourism Sandebrito Forestry and Residents Community Voluntary Help for Fire Victims in the Locality[12] Valmiñor Winery Montes de Camos Community	
Types of brands	Sectors	Dichotomic variables
Public and institutional (7 brands) Private association (1) Private commercial (1)	Tourism (2 brands) Food & Drinks (1) Training (1) Other (5)	Public service (E#1#1) Cultural value (E#2#1) Advertising interest (E#3#1) Intentional presence (E#4#1) Brand not hidden (E#5#2)

Source: prepared by the authors

Image 3: Off-site tests on MCE 6 P2. Outstanding shots
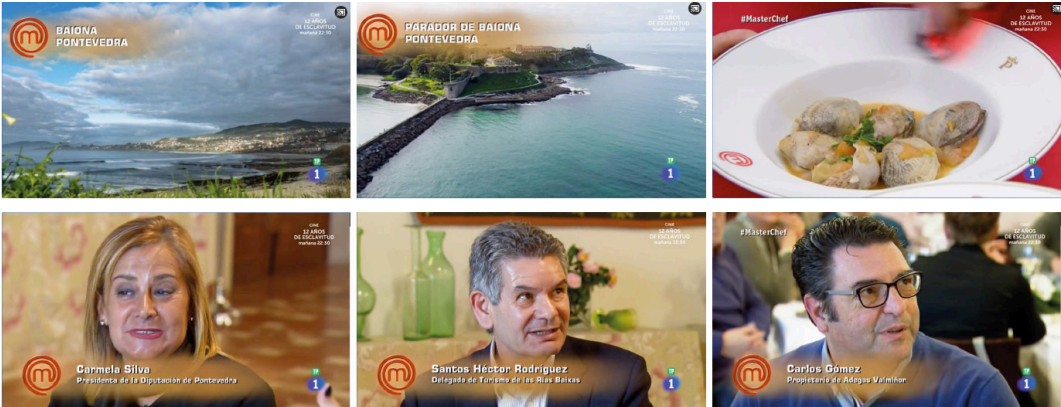
Source: shots of programme (Fernández and Tomás, 2018).

In the case of MCE 6 P13, the off-site test was carried out in Illescas, a locality in the province of Toledo. In fact, the first 25 seconds of the test were dedicated to making a presentation akin to an advertisement in which the tourism landmarks in Toledo capital were highlighted (from 0:57:14, see image 4, upper row, left):

> Presenter (*off-camera*): All good endings need an exceptional setting and Toledo is just that. Declared a World Heritage Site and of international tourism interest, Toledo has a historic centre which is truly a monumental gem.

After giving a brief overview of the cultural appeal of the city which may be understood as fulfilling the mission of public service, a commercial brand is presented which captures our interest for the rest of the test. El Bohío is a restaurant run by Pepe Rodríguez, one of the people in the MCE jury. Apart from explaining the history of El Bohío, repeated shots of the restaurant are shown, with visible logotypes which reinforce the brand visually (see image 4). Finally, the winners of previous editions of MCE and *MasterChef Junior* come onto the programme as diners, which gives the programme a certain air of self-promotion (see table 7).

Table 7: Off-site tests on MCE 6 P13. Batch of El Bohío brands & MasterChef *winners*

Brands cited in Acknowledgments	Brands on screen during the test
El Bohío Restaurant Castilla~La Mancha Regional Government. Toledo council Illescas Council	El Bohío (mentioned and on screen) Cayetana Guillén Cuervo, *MasterChef Celebrity* 1 (in a title) Winners of previous editions of MCE and *MasterChef Junior* (in a title)

Types of brands	Sectors	Dichotomic variables
Private commercial (1 brand) Public and institutional (3) Personal brand (12)	Hotel and catering (6 brands) Culture and Performance (1) Sports (1) Other (govt and studios) (8)	Public service (E#1#1) Cultural value (E#2#1) Advertising interest (E#3#1) Intentional presence (E#4#1) Brand not hidden (E#5#2)

Source: prepared by the authors

Image 4: Off-site tests on MCE 6 P13. Outstanding shots

Source: shots of programme (Fernández and Tomás, 2018).

3.2.2. Off-site tests with private brands only

In second place in terms of representation within the analysed corpus, came the off-site tests which only showed private brands. To illustrate these, the cases for programmes MCE 6 P4, MCE 6 P7, MCE 6 P12 and MCE 1 P7 were presented.

In the off-site test for MCE 6 P4, although the renowned chef Dani García, was also present, the one who received the most outstanding promotional treatment was the singer Pablo Alborán, who appeared with the backing of his record label, Warner Music (see table 8). The test is recorded in his rehearsal studio and his songs are heard repeatedly and are played whenever the artist appears (from 0:49:40):

> Presenter: A singer who in little over two years has sold over two and a half million copies of his first three records, and that is not all. He received 45 platinum records and won a Goya award for the Best Original Song in 2016. Can you imagine who this might be?

During the test, the presenter interviews the singer, something which happens aside from the culinary activity in the programme: both sit down directly opposite each other on the stage and talk exclusively about the musical career of the singer and his new tour *Prometo* (see image 5, lower row, left). At a high point, Pablo Alborán puts on a free performance exclusively for MCE, which on screen lasts exactly one minute (from 1:40:30).

As this concerns promoting the Spanish cultural industry, this case of branded content might be linked to the duties for public media set out in Law 17/2006, specifically in art. 3.2.i.

Table 8: Off-site tests on MCE 6 P4. Batch of brands Pablo Alborán & Dani García

Brands cited in Acknowledgments	Brands on screen during the test	
Pablo Alborán Warner Music	Pablo Alborán, singer (title) Dani García, chef Dani García restaurant (Marbella), two Michelin stars (title) Team of Warner Music Spain (title) Rocío Satrústegui (title) Sonia Vergara (title)	
Types of brands	Sectors	Dichotomic variables
Private commercial (1) Personal brand (2)	Culture and Performance (2) Hotel & Catering (1)	Public service (E#1#1) Cultural value (E#2#1) Advertising interest (E#3#1) Intentional presence (E#4#1) Brand not hidden (E#5#2)

Source: prepared by the authors.

Image 5: Off-site tests on MCE 6 P4. Outstanding shots
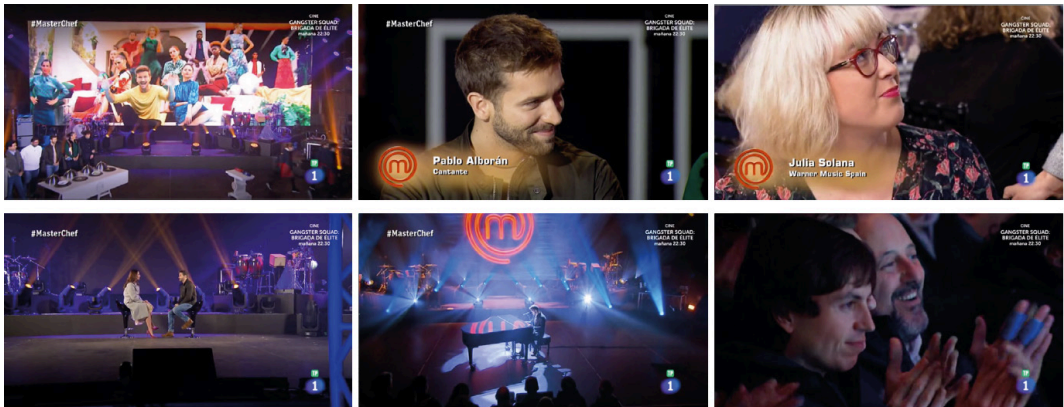
Source: shots of programme (Fernández and Tomás, 2018).

The off-site tests on MCE 6 P7 are carried out at the Wanda Metropolitano, the Atlético de Madrid stadium. There are plenty of hyperbolic texts praising the club (such as that included below, from 0:54:48), acompanied by a song by Joaquín Sabina *Motivos de un sentimiento (Reasons for a feeling)*, a non-official anthem of the team. Also noteworthy are the shots which show the corporate elements of the club and how spectacular the new architectural construction is (see image 6, upper row):

Presenter (off-screen): This is the newest football pitch in Europe and also the leading one. A year has not gone by since it was inaugurated and applause is pouring down on it […].

Judge Samantha: Contenders, welcome to the heart of Atlético de Madrid. Welcome to Wanda Metropolitano. I can see you´re impressed and no wonder, this is an amazing stadium, incredible.

Judge Jordi: Contenders, Atlético de Madrid represents all the values we uphold on *MasterChef*. It has won 30 big titles and has done this thanks to the passion the players who go onto the pitch have.

Among the people interviewed, is Enrique Cerezo, chairman of Atlético Madrid. On its visit, MCE organises a surprise birthday party for him, a good occasion for highlighting the history of the club and showing his tropheys. The cake is from Catering Samantha de España, a catering business which belongs to this MCE judge. The birthday cake comes in the Atlético colours, as does Samantha herself who comes dressed for the occasion, in red, white and blue (see image 6, lower row).

Table 9: Off-site tests on MCE 6 P7. Batch of brands Atlético de Madrid & Wanda Metropolitano

Brands cited in Acknowledgments	Brands on screen during the test	
Club Atlético de Madrid S.A.D. Wanda Metropolitano Centerplate	Wanda Metropolitano (on screen and mentioned) Atlético de Madrid (on screen and mentioned) Andrea Tumbarello, chef Don Giovanni restaurant (title) Sandro Silva, chef Amazónico restaurant (title) Enrique Cerezo, chairman of Atlético de Madrid (title) Personalities and fans of Atlético de Madrid (title)	
Types of brands	Sectors	Dichotomic variables
Private commercial (3) Personal brand (2)	Sports (2) Hotel & Catering (2) Others (management) (1)	Public service (E#1#2) Cultural value (E#2#1) Advertising interest (E#3#1) Intentional presence (E#4#1) Brand not hidden (E#5#2)

Source: prepared by the authors

Image 6: Off-site tests on MCE 6 P7. Outstanding shots
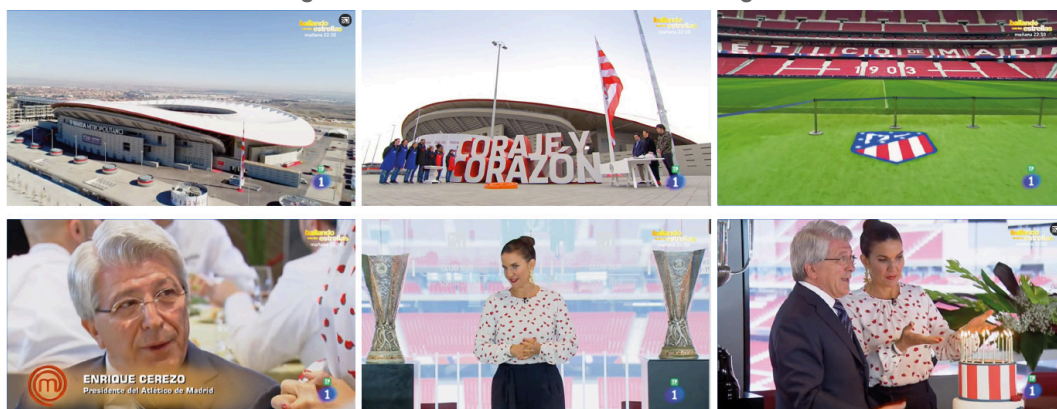
Source: shots of programme (Fernández and Tomás, 2018).

The off-site test on MCE 6 P12 is carried out at Club Alma, a meeting point for business and social purposes where, on account of this test, different experts in the world of catering appear (see table 10). As in all the off-site tests, the format of branded content is identified, although this time it may be considered as an infomercial.

Shots are repeated in which the uniquess of Club Alma is shown, with the corporate symbol (A) in full view. Some of these shots are extra diegetic and no doubt come from the promotional resources archive of the club. There also appear titles added by the programme which literally cite the name of the brand (see image 7, upper row).

In the interviews Samantha has with the diners, the professional profile of each of them is relegated to second place, overshadowed by the praise heaped on Club Alma for all its attributes. Even practical information is provided on how to become a member of the club and there are statements in which Samantha and the interviewees act as endorsers (from 1:13:15, see image 7, lower row):

Judge Samantha: How are you?

Rosa Rivas and Cristina Jolonch: Hi Fine.

Samantha: Rosa, Cristina, two amazing gastronomy journalists. It is an honour to have you here today on *MasterChef* to sample our dishes.

Rosa and Cristina: Thank you very much.

Samantha: Well, do you know this place?

Rosa and Cristina: No.

Samantha: Club Alma is a wonderful place.

Cristina: It´s very nice, isn´t it?

Rosa: It´s very nice. This is one of those very elegant manor houses in Madrid.

Samantha: Yes, it´s a club you need to be a member of. Then you can come here and enjoy it, spend the day here, work… there are loads of things to do. Yes, if you like, you can come and try it one day. Then you can become a member, which would be great.

Rosa: Let´s try.

Samantha: Yes, you should. You´ll love it.

Table 10: Off-site tests on MCE 6 P12. Batch of brands Club Alma & experts in gastronomy

Brands cited in Acknowledgments	Brands on screen during the test	
Club Alma	Club Alma (mentioned, on screen, in a title) Fina Puigdevall, chef R. Les Cols (in a title) Macarena Castro, chef R. Maca de Castro (in a title) Manuela Romeraldo, sommelier and director R. El Poblet (in a title) Mª José San Román, chef R. Monastrell (in a title) Mª José Huertas, sumiller R. La Terraza del Casino (in a title) Sara Moreno, front of house manager at R. Media Ración (in a title) Esther Manzano, chef R. La Salgar (in a title) Rosa Rivas, gastronomy journalist from *El País* and *7canibales* (in a title) Cristina Jolonch, gastronomy journalist, *La Vanguardia* (in a title) Paz Ivison, gastronomy journalist and writer (in a title)	
Types of brands	Sectors	Dichotomic variables
Private commercial (1) Personal brand (10)	Hotel & Catering (8) Publishing (3)	Public service (E#1#2) Cultural value (E#2#1) Advertising interest (E#3#1) Intentional presence (E#4#1) Brand not hidden (E#5#2)

Source: prepared by the authors

**Image 7: Off-site tests on MCE 6 P12. Outstanding shots**
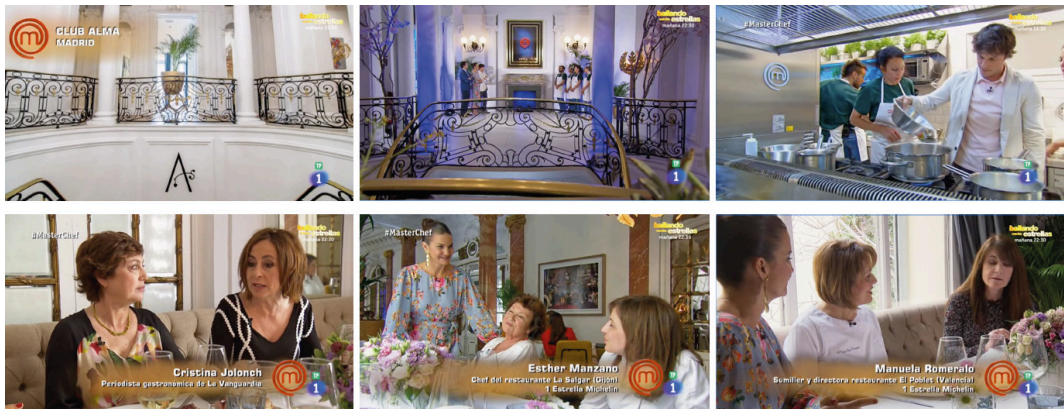
Source: shots of programme (Fernández and Tomás, 2018).

The marked presence of private brands is frequent throughout the whole corpus analysed. Various examples of this are given in the first series. In the off-site test on MCE 1 P7 three private brands stand out

from the hotel and catering trade: The Westin Palace, Hotel Hesperia and the Ritz, three luxury hotels in Madrid. There are plenty of shots which highlight the attractiveness of the premises (see image 8, lower row), in which their logotypes are clearly visible as are titles added in postproduction with the brand name (see image 8, upper row).

Image 8: Off-site tests on MCE 1 P7. Outstanding shots
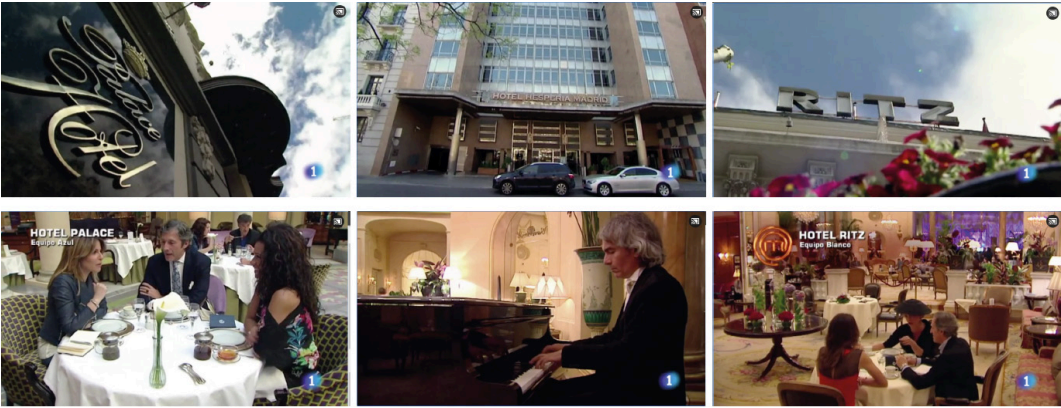
Source: shots of programme (Escorial and Sanz, 2013).

3.2.3. Off-site tests just with public brands

Taking the analysed corpus as a reference, the off-site tests which just show public brands are the least plentiful in MCE. Unlike the other ones, in these tests there is no perception that the brands shown have commercial value. This does not mean such brands have an interest in promoting themselves from the perspective of what we understand as institutional communication or advertising. Examples of this can be seen on programmes MCE 6 P8 and MCE 8 P7.

In the former the armed forces stand out as an institution. In order to display their capabilities, the test begins with a dramatised recreation of a kidnapping. This is an example of merging fiction and a brand which typifies the branded content format. During the test, there are plenty of references to sacrifice and the humanitarian work this institution carries out. The role of women in the armed forces is also mentioned, stressing their equality. At this point, we must remember that fostering gender equality is one of the responsibilities Corporation RTVE has, as is reinforcing the Spanish national identity and supporting its institutions.

Table 11: Off-site tests on MCE 6 P8. Batch of brands Brigada Aragón I & Ejército de Tierra (Aragón I Brigade & the Army)

| Brands cited in Acknowledgments	Brands on screen during the test	
The Army Brigada Aragón I Automobile forces from the Army	Brigada Aragón I (mention) The Army (mention) Members of Brigada Aragón I (title)	
Types of brands	Sectors	Dichotomic variables
Public and institutional (3)	Others (defence) (3)	Public service (E#1#1) Cultural value (E#2#2) Advertising interest (E#3#1) Intentional presence (E#4#1) Brand not hidden (E#5#2)

Source: prepared by the authors

Image 9: Off-site tests on MCE 6 P8. Outstanding shots

Source: shot of programme (Fernández and Tomás, 2018).

Similar cases of branded content were observed in other series, as seen in the off-site test on MCE 8 P7. This time, the sports sector is supported from an institutional approach from the Centre for High Performance from the Higher Council of Sports (see image 10). The premises are shown and the function these kinds of centres have is explained. Also, the capacity of those preparing for an elite sport for overcoming obstacles is also praised. Spanish sport, in turn and generally speaking, is promoted as well as the position it has in the international arena. In this respect, it is understood that there is a contribution to public service.

Image 10: Off-site tests on MCE 8 P7. Outstanding shots
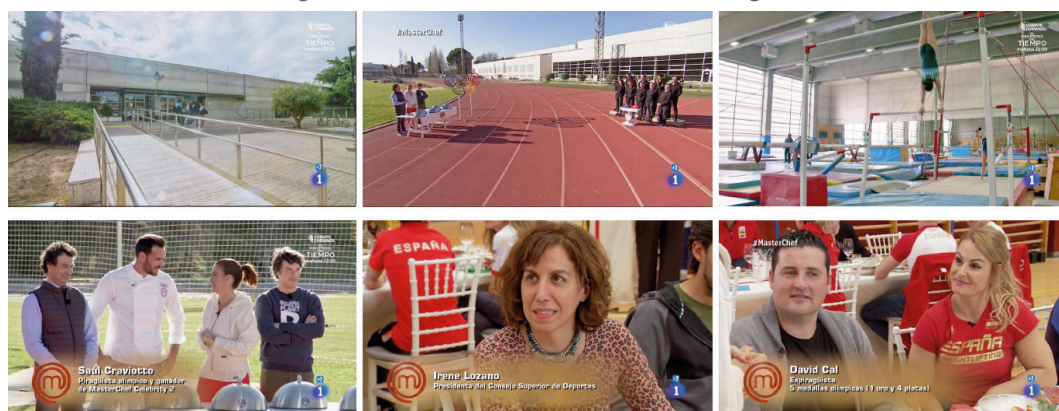
Source: shots of programme (Fernández and Sagasti, 2020).

3.3. Advertising contracts

Due to the documentary research carried out, there is evidence that there are advertising contracts with MCE. The awards mentioned are available on the Contracting platform for the Public Sector from the Treasury from the Government of Spain [13]. It should be stressed that as this is the source, only evidence related to public companies or institutions has been found. However, seeing that there are also off-site tests in which private brands are promoted, there are signs that the *modus operandi* could be the same with them.

In table 12 a summary of the contracts related to MCE 6 and other series have been included. The terms on the table have literally been taken from the original documents. Note that in the "object", "classification" and "amount" columns the advertising nature of these paid actions is indicated explicitly.

Note that the first two cases corresponded to the off-site tests on MCE 6 P2 and MCE 6 P13, analysed previously. It is now seen that the presentations which advertise the beauty of Baiona and Toledo do not fall within the commitment RTVE has in promoting the whole of Spain. In fact, they correspond to institutional advertising campaigns in which the public entities involved pay a fee for this.

Table 12: Institutional advertising contracts paid in MCE

Prog.	Contracter	Purpose	Clasific.	Amount	File No	Date
MCE 6 P2	Chairperson of Pontevedra Provincial Council	"Advertising sponsorship for the television programme *MasterChef*-Programme 2-Series 6"	Advertising services	€10,610	2018 001926	23/01/2018
MCE 6 P13	General Directorate of Tourism, Trade and Crafts from the Castilla-La Mancha Regional Government	"Sponsorship 6th edition, programme no13 *MasterChef* Toledo Claim, as a tourism campaign for Castilla-La Mancha"	This data does not appear.	€3,630	2018/ 006732	30/05/2018
MCE 7 P1	Institute of Agrarian Technology of Castile and León	"Inclusion in MG *'Tierra de Sabor*(Land of taste)'* during the off-site shooting for programme *MasterChef* 7 which will be held on 16th and 17th of January 2019 at the Monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña in Castrillo del Val (Burgos)"	Advertising services	€17,974	B2019/ 001306	15/01/2019
MCE 7 P2	Chairperson of Castellón Provincial Council	"Sponsorship of an off-site test of *MasterChef* 7 in the province of Castellón"	Tv production services	€30,250	27/ 2019	21/01/2019
MCE 7 P10	Institute of Agricultural Technology of Castile and León	"Inclusion of products from Zamora in MG *'Tierra de Sabor'* while shooting off-site on the programme *MasterChef* 7 Edition/Series, which will be held on 20th of March 2019 in Zamora"	Advertising campaigns services	€17,974	B2019/ 001584	15/03/2019
MCE 8 P3	Murcia Regional Government	"Services for shooting the programme *MasterChef* in Murcia"	Services for cultural and sports dissemination; radio and tv; tv, tv production	€18,004	F/2020/ 2727	24/01/2020

| MCE 9 P4 | Institute of Agricultural Technology of Castile and León | "Placements in M.G. *Tierra de Sabor* during off-site shooting for the programme '*MasterChef* Anonymous Edition, Series 9', recorded on 10th of February in the San Isidro (León) ski station including its subsequent edition and broadcast on TVE" | Advertising campaigns services | €18,029 | B2021/001537 | 08/02/2021 |

Source: produced by the author from the Contracting Platform for the Public Service.

Apart from the cases cited in MCE, at least another ten similar tenders were found for paid institutional communication on *MasterChef Junior* and *MasterChef Celebrity* on the same platform; this shows that this format is in the order of the day on MasterChef within the context of RTVE.

4. Discussion

By means of this content analysis, the appearance of brands with advertising interests on MCE is suitably documented and described. The programme was shown to include a broad number of brands, apart from the so called cultural sponsors. In some cases, the appearance of these brands is not linked to the mission of public service of the media and its cultural value is debatable. In turn, the brands frequently appear that are represented by means of a range of commercial communication formats. Once again, these cannot be deemed to be within the formula of cultural sponsorship permitted in RTVE and reveal there is a commercial purpose.

Among other formats branded content aquires special protagonism, which incorporates the brands into the narrative of the programme. This makes it difficult to tell the entertainment contents apart from those that are merely promotional. Also, cases of branded content, mainly those in the off-site tests incorporate cultural values and/or a public service, without renouncing the commercial value promoting these brands entails.

Reading these results in light of the law helps to verify that the presence of brands on MCE, especially on MCE 6, exceeds the figure of cultural sponsorship and infringes the LFCRTVE, with total impunity. This enables the starting hypothesis to be validated.

Furthermore, with the findings of the documentary research the limits of this hypothesis can be broadened. It is not just that MCE violates the LFCRTVE; also cases which may be considered as examples of covert advertising have been identified. This is a practice that is forbidden by European (Directive of Television without Frontiers) and Spanish law (Law 25/1994 and LGCA).

To make this assertion, the previously cited resolution SNC/DTSA/030/16/CRTVE has been taken as a reference, in which the CNMC fines MCE for broadcasting covert advertising from González Byass wineries. Comparing evidence and proven facts, great similarity can be seen between this case and the vast majority of off-site tests.

- There is a presentation of goods or services.
- There is a promotional purpose.
- The public is misled in terms of the nature of the programme (due to the hybridation of entertainment contents and promotional messages).
- The infringement is continuous.

In the case of González Byass, Corporation RTVE claimed there was no "business relationships or any other link between CRTVE and González Byass wineries", and, also no payment had been received" (CNMC, 2016: 3). CNMC responded that, although there was no commercial relationship (or one could not be proved), the intention of making covert advertising is still serious and constitutes an illicit activity, as included in article 2.32 of the LGCA.

In any event, it should be remembered that, by means of the documentary research, two examples of a business relationship with the institutions promoted on MCE 6 have been identified. It is true that the

relationship was not directly established with Corporation RTVE, but, rather, with the producer, Shine Iberia. Nevertheless, apart from having a visage of legality, this does not make any difference to either the spirit or the essence of the matter.

That is, the law has been broken in a third way. As already commented on, the LFCRTVE only permits advertising and institutional communication when there is no financial benefit (article 7.3). In short, the starting hypothesis has not only been validated, but also enlarged on verifying there have been new violations of the regulation.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Triple infraction of the regulation

The commercial exploitation on the programme MCE by means of brands with advertising interests is an ever-growing and consolidated practice and one it intends to continue. As the main conclusion from the research, this practice is deemed to break the law in three senses:

- MCE not only exceeds the legal figure of cultural sponsorship as set out in the LFCRTVE;
- it also makes paid institutional communication, which is equally forbidden by the LFCRTVE
- it engages in covert advertising, forbidden by the Directive on Television without Frontiers in Law 25/1994 and the LCCA.

5.2 Hybrid language which causes confusion

As a communicative strategy, the programme strives to hide the presence of brands by means of hybrid language, which give rise to confusion which breaches the principle of differentiating commercial messages and feeds the illegal activity of covert advertising.

We can confirm, in this regard, something that Segarra-Saavedra and Hidalgo-Marí (2014) and Álvarez (2020) warned about: branded content is the most represented formula on this programme. This provides a differentiating character, which gives greater significance to the brands and more exposure time (70% of the total time with the presence of brands [14]).

5.3 The whitewashing role of culture and public service

It is difficult to find an off-site test in which some type of contribution to public service or a certain contribution to culture cannot be used. However, veiled as these elements are, there are messages with a clear commercial value, a point which is expressly forbidden by the type of cultural and sports sponsorship contemplated by the LFCRTVE. Moreover, especially in other sections of the programme, there are plenty of brand appearances which also have a commercial value, although on these occasions they are not usually related to the mission of public service nor to promoting culture.

If a gastronomy simile is permitted, we could say that MCE has come up with the recipe to including just the right amount of ingredients which ensure favourable (or even kind) criticism. In other words, MCE (especially in its off-site tests) uses public service and culture as a safe-conduct, a door which opens it to redemption. This exempts it from scrutiny by the law and enables it to act with more flexibility, and often enjoys impunity.

5.4 Cultural contents and public service which hide a new illegality

At the heart of this mission to promote cultural values and provide a public service, there is great contradiction. The times in which a tourist destination is visited or when the benefits of local products are explained is precisely what may be identified as cultural elements on the programme MCE. They are even related to the obligations RTVE has.

Therefore, these are the elements which provide the justification for the programme to receive funding by means of cultural sponsorship. However, as has been seen, some of the products and services on the programme are included as institutional advertising in exchange for financial gain, an activity which is a violation of the LFCRTVE.

6. Specific contribution of each author

Contributions	Author
Conception and study design	Signee 1, signee 2
Search for documents	Signee 1
Data collection	Signee 1
Analysis and critical interpretation of data	Signee 1, signee 2
Draft, format, review and approval of versions	Signee 1, signee 2

7. Acknowledgement

8. Bibliography

[1] Abdala, K. A. y Andacht, F. A. (2018). Signos de identidad en las cocinas de la telerrealidad: un análisis semiótico de dos formatos televisivos. *LIS. Letra. Imagen. Sonido. Ciudad Mediatizada,* 19, 19-39. https://bit.ly/3BuRYFk

[2] Álvarez, V. (2020). La narrativa transmedia del restaurante MasterChef. *Razón y Palabra, 24*(109), 4-24. https://bit.ly/3sZ796Z

[3] Capriotti, P. (2007). El Patrocinio como Expresión de la Responsabilidad Social Corporativa de una Organización. *Razón y Palabra, 12*(56). https://bit.ly/3BuIvOj

[4] Castelló-Martínez, A. y Del Pino-Romero, C. (2014). Análisis del *branded content* en televisión: estudio de casos españoles. *Revista de Comunicación de la Sociedad Española de Estudios de Comunicación Iberoamericana,* 34, 134–149. https://bit.ly/3h6wNlB

[5] CNMC (2018). Resolución SNC/DTSA/030/16/CRTVE. Del procedimiento sancionador incoado a CRTVE por el presunto incumplimiento de lo dispuesto en el artículo 18.2 de la Ley 7/2010, de 31 de marzo, General de la Comunicación Audiovisual. https://bit.ly/3kHNS64

[6] Curnutt, H. (2016). Cooking on reality TV: Chef-participants and culinary television. In P. Bradley (Ed.), *Food, Media and Contemporary Culture* (pp. 144-163). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

[7] Dahlen, M. & Rosengren, S. (2016). If Advertising Won't Die, What Will It Be? Toward a Working Definition of Advertising. *Journal of Advertising, 45*(3), 334–345. https://doi.org/gksm9n

[8] Directiva 89/552/CEE del Consejo, de 3 de octubre de 1989, sobre la coordinación de determinadas disposiciones legales, reglamentarias y administrativas de los Estados miembros relativas al ejercicio de actividades de radiodifusión televisiva (Televisión sin Fronteras) (1989). *Diario Oficial de la Comunidades Europeas, L 298*, de 17 de octubre de 1989, pp. 23–30. https://bit.ly/3kE1KhL

[9] Du Plessis, C. (2019). Prosumer engagement through story-making in transmedia branding. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 22*(1), 175-192. https://doi.org/gtb4

[10] Escorial, E. y Sanz, E. (Directores); Rey, M., Rivas, A. (Productoras). (2013). *MasterChef España. Temporada 2* [Programa de TV]. Madrid: Shine Iberia y RTVE. https://bit.ly/3DuC3J8

[11] Escorial, E. y Sanz, E. (Directores); Rey, M., Rivas, A. (Productoras). (2014). MasterClass sobre cómo cortar jamón. En *MasterChef Especial Navidad 2014* [Programa de TV]. Madrid: Shine Iberia y RTVE. https://bit.ly/3gN7aWI

[12] Escorial, E. y Sanz, E. (Directores); Rey, M., Rivas, A. (Productoras). (2016). *MasterChef España. Temporada 4* [Programa de TV]. Madrid: Shine Iberia y RTVE. https://bit.ly/2WES8vg

[13] Escudero, J. (29/12/2019). Evolución de los ingresos de RTVE por patrocinios. *El Confidencial.* https://bit.ly/2UZFRR8

[14] Europa Press (19/04/2021). Pérez Tornero anuncia una consulta pública sobre el futuro de RTVE como base para elaborar el nuevo mandato marco. *Europa Press*. https://bit.ly/2WwPZBn

[15] Fernández, P. y Sagasti, O. (Directores); Rey, M. (Productora). (2020). *MasterChef España. Temporada 8* [Programa de TV]. Fuente el Saz de Jarama (Madrid): Shine Iberia y RTVE. https://bit.ly/3zwDEvr

[16] Fernández, P. y Sagasti, O. (Directores); Rey, M. (Productora). (2018). *MasterChef España. Temporada 6* [Programa de TV]. Fuente el Saz de Jarama (Madrid): Shine Iberia y RTVE. https://bit.ly/3kDlWQW

[17] Formoso-Barro, M. J.; Sanjuán, A. y Martínez-Costa, S. (2016). Branded content versus product placement. Visibilidad, recuerdo y percepción del consumidor. *Pensar la Publicidad. Revista Internacional de Investigaciones Publicitarias, 10,* 13–26. https://doi.org/gnfw

[18] Gallardo, M.; Elías, R. y Jiménez-Marín, G. (2018). La publicidad en Televisión Española tras la ley 8/2009 de Financiación de la Corporación de Radio y Televisión Española. Análisis a través del caso 'MasterChef'. *Pensar la Publicidad. Revista Internacional de Investigaciones Publicitarias, 12,* 53-74. https://doi.org/g4wr

[19] Halligan, B. & Shan, D. (2014). *Inbound Marketing. Attract, Engage, and Delight Customers Online*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

[20] Hardy, J. (2021). *Branded Content: The Fateful Merging of Media and Marketing*. London: Routledge.

[21] Heredero, O. y Reyes, F. (2016). Los efectos profesionales de la crisis de la televisión pública española: el creador audiovisual low cost y las nuevas tecnologías. *AdComunica,* 11, 95–118. https://doi.org/gtb5

[22] Herring, S. C. (2004). Content analysis for new media: Rethinking the paradigm. En *New Research for New Media: Innovative Research Methodologies Symposium Working Papers and Readings* (pp. 47–66). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota of Journalism and Mass Communication. https://bit.ly/38uouuS

[23] Hidalgo-Marí, T. y Segarra-Saavedra, J. (2013). Televisión y gastronomía. Análisis histórico de la programación televisiva desde una perspectiva publicitaria. *Pensar la Publicidad, Revista Internacional de Investigaciones Publicitarias, 7*(2), 317–341. https://doi.org/gtb6

[24] Hogan, M. (20/10/2017). Cooking shows don't get bigger than this: how *MasterChef* conquered the world. *The Telegraph*. https://bit.ly/3yvriCO

[25] Jakus, D. & Zub□i□, K. (2016). Transmedia marketing and re-invention of public relations. *Marketing Instytucji Naukowych i Badawczych, 4*(22), 91-102. https://doi.org/gtb7

[26] Jenkins, H. (2010). Transmedia storytelling and entertainment: An annotated syllabus. *Continuum, 24*(6), 943–958. https://doi.org/cchzjq

[27] Jiménez-Marín, G.; Polo, D. y Jódar-Marín, J. (2012). La televisión pública en 2011: TVE sin publicidad. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación,* 3, 14–30. https://doi.org/gtb8

[28] Jivkova-Semova, D. (2011). RTVE sin publicidad: un modelo de financiación en estado de emergencia. *VivatAcademia, Revista de Comunicación,* 116, 75–91. https://doi.org/gtb9

[29] Johnston, M. A. & Spais, G. S. (2015). Conceptual foundations of sponsorship research. *Journal of Promotion Management, 21*(3), 296-312. https://doi.org/gtcb

[30] Ketchum, C. (2005). The Essence of Cooking Shows: How the Food Network Constructs Consumer Fantasies. *Journal of Communication Inquiry, 29*(3), 217–234. https://doi.org/bmt25w

[31] Ley 8/2009, de 28 de agosto, de Financiación de la Corporación de Radio Televisión Española (2009). *Boletín Oficial del Estado, 210*, de 31 de agosto de 2009, 74003–74015. https://bit.ly/2Y1u3Pt

[32] Ley 17/2006, de 5 de junio, de la Radio y la Televisión de Titularidad Estatal (2006). *Boletín Oficial del Estado, 134*, de 6 de junio de 2006. https://bit.ly/3yvL2Gj

[33] Ley 7/2010, de 31 de marzo, General de la Comunicación Audiovisual (2010). *Boletín Oficial del Estado, 79*, de 1 de abril de 2010. https://bit.ly/3mOwgs8

[34] Lin, H. C. & Bruning, P. F. (2021). Sponsorship in focus: a typology of sponsorship contexts and research agenda. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 39*(2), 213-233. https://doi.org/gtcc

[35] MacRury, I. (2017). Branded Content: Rupture, rapture and reflections. *Journal of Promotional Communications, 5*(3), 248–259. https://bit.ly/3mREZtp

[36] Martí-Parreño, J. (2011). Propuesta de una herramienta de análisis de contenido para el emplazamiento de producto en contenidos audiovisuales. *Pensar la Publicidad, Revista Internacional de Investigaciones Publicitarias, 5*(2), 65–92. https://doi.org/fxmcwq

[37] Ministerio de Hacienda del Gobierno de España (2021). Plataforma de Contratación del Sector Público. https://contrataciondelestado.es

[38] Muñoz, M. (2015). La financiación de RTVE. Qué hay de permanente en un debate que fluctúa. *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico, 21*(1), 455-470. https://doi.org/gtcf

[39] Marketing Directo (23/01/2015). Navidul se cuela en las cocinas de *MasterChef* con una novedosa estrategia. https://bit.ly/3DvvndR

[40] Ojer, T. (2011). El papel del gobierno corporativo en la buena gestión de las empresas públicas de televisión: el caso de RTVE. *Anàlisi. Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura,* 43, 59–71. https://bit.ly/3gKU1NC

[41] Ortiz, M. Á. (2010). El nuevo marco legal para la financiación de la radiotelevisión pública estatal en España. *Comunicación y Hombre: Revista Interdisciplinar de Ciencias de La Comunicación y Humanidades,* 6, 257–270.

[42] Ramos-Serrano, M. (2006). Cuando la marca ofrece entretenimiento: aproximación al concepto de *advertainment*. *Questiones Publicitarias, 1*(11), 33–49.

[43] Rodríguez, C. (01/07/2015). *'MasterChef'*, 25 años de la cocina como competición televisiva. *La Voz de Galicia*. https://bit.ly/3jxSZGR

[44] Ron, R.; Álvarez, A. y Núñez, P. (2014). *Bajo la influencia del 'branded content'*. ESIC.

[45] Segarra-Saavedra, J. e Hidalgo-Marí, T. (2014). El rescate de la televisión pública estatal. Patrocinio cultural y branded content como fuentes de financiación de contenido televisivo en TVE. En M. Francés Domènec, J. Gavaldà Roca, G. Llorca Abad y À. Peris Blanes (Coords.), *La televisión de la crisis ante el abismo digital* (pp. 433-458). Valencia: Gedisa. https://bit.ly/2Y0R8PZ

[46] Terán, B. (03/06/2015). *MasterChef*: la publicidad regresó a TVE (sin darnos cuenta). *La Información*. https://bit.ly/2Y1wH7R

[47] Marwick, A. (2010). RTVE ha ingresado casi 92 millones de euros en 'anuncios' desde que no emite publicidad. *El Confidencial*. https://bit.ly/3sYYxx0

Notes

1. RTVE is the public radio television media in Spain.

2. Shine Iberia belongs to The Banijay Group, a large Chinese multinational in the audiovisual production sector.

3. On the date this article was drafted MCE has had nine series developed in consecutive years. The other versions of the programme which are also carried out in Spain, *MasterChef Junior* and *MasterChef Celebrity*, together have had eight and five series respectively.

4. Restaurant opened to the public in Madrid (Calle Velázquez, 150).

5. From here onwards the following criteria will be followed for abbreviating series and programmes. For example, in the first series, programme 3 is identified as MCE 1 P3.

6. *Venenciar* is an activity in which a *venencia* is used. A *venencia* is an implement for extracting samples of sherry from aging barrels.

7. In the second semester of 2021, all the MCE series, *MasterChef Junior* and *MasterChef Celebrity* prior to 2020 were taken off RTVE Play, the online platform for the public media. On enquiring at the RTVE Office for the Spectator Rights as to the reason why, the response given was that this was due to a matter of broadcasting rights, according to which only the last series could be provided.

8. See that the research focuses on MCE. That is, the version with annonymous adult contenders; not child contenders (*MasterChef Junior*), nor famous ones (*MasterChef Celebrity*).

9. In cases of branded content, measuring the time it is exhibited has been made by recording the exact time it starts (when the brand first appears) and adding the duration of the shots in which the presence of the brand is significant.

10. The supermarket El Corte Inglés and the electrodomestics company Bosch are two cultural sponsors which are maintained throughout all the series. Specifically, MCE 2 was also sponsored by the Burgo de Arias cheese brand.

11. The network of *Paradores* in Spain is a group of hotels from the public sector. It arose from an initiative in 1910 aimed at boosting tourism in the country, *Paradores* are located in areas of exceptional beauty and are outstanding for their architectural merits.

12. In the summer of 2020 a locality in the Spanish region of Galicia was devastated by forest fires. In this edition of Masterchef there is a tribute to all those who volunteered their help to the victims of these fires.

13. https://contrataciondelestado.es

14. Average result considering the 13 MCE 6 programmes.

Dr. Marta DE-MIGUEL-ZAMORA
Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. Spain. marta.demiguel@urjc.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9634-4726

Dr. Elena BORAU-BOIRA
Universidad Antonio de Nebrija. Spain. eborau@nebrija.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4367-2846

Dr. María ABELLÁN-HERNÁNDEZ
Universidad Internacional de La Rioja. Spain. maria.abellan@unir.net/maria.abellan4@um.es

The case of BBVA Aprendemos juntos as a brand story model

Brand Story. El caso Aprendemos juntos de BBVA como modelo de relato de marca

Abstract
Advertising is undergoing a process of continuous redefinition in its forms of communication. The so-called digital paradigm shift, the transmedia revolution, the big data or the consumer-prosumer transformation are some aspects that communication in advertising is currently facing. Due to the increasingly broad channels and progressively more complex interaction processes with their audiences, specific positioning and differentiation acts demand articulation from what we call branded content. This text explores one of the specific dimensions of branded content, based on the proposal and validation of a narrative analysis model adapted and applied to the planning and creation of the advertising story or brand story, focusing on the case study of Aprendemos juntos, from BBVA. The results validate our analytical model and contrast it with information obtained from an in-depth interview with a member of the team responsible for the campaign. The results indicate the need to create quality content based on the utility and social values our environment demands, along with the importance of creating "real" links with the public so as to achieve interaction with them and, ultimately, true engagement with the brand.

Resumen
La Publicidad se halla en un proceso de redefinición continuo en sus formas de comunicación. El cambio de paradigma digital, la revolución transmedia, el Big Data o el viraje de consumidores a prosumidores son aspectos que la comunicación en publicidad debe afrontar. Debido a unos canales cada vez más amplios y procesos de interacción progresivamente más complejos con sus públicos, las acciones de posicionamiento y diferenciación a partir del contenido de marca, son esenciales. Este texto explora una de las dimensiones específicas del Branded Content a partir de la propuesta y validación de un modelo de análisis narrativo adaptado y aplicado a la planificación y creación del relato publicitario o Brand Story centrando el foco en el caso de estudio de Aprendemos juntos de BBVA. Los resultados obtenidos permiten validar el modelo analítico y contrastarlo además con información obtenida de la entrevista en profundidad realizada a una de los responsables de la campaña. Los resultados indican la necesidad de crear contenido de calidad basado en la utilidad y en los valores sociales que exige nuestro entorno, así como la importancia de crear vínculos "reales" con los públicos para conseguir la interacción con ellos y, finalmente, un verdadero engagement con la marca.

Keywords
Branded content; Brand Story; advertising narrative; strategic planning, creativity

Palabras clave
Branded content; Brand Story; narrativa publicitaria; planificación estratégica publicitaria; creatividad.

1. Introduction

The narrative orders and structures stories, as does the study of narratives; it makes events plausible -whether real or fictitious- and presents a perspective about what happened. The author chooses the events, story's focus, and order of the events, which creates an account with intentions. Every narrative has a communication goal and therefore fulfills a strategic function, which can also be applied to brand communications.

The legitimacy of organizations depends mainly on the ability to construct and communicate a relevant, coherent, and consistent narrative, convincing stakeholders to recognize the organization's value (Suchman, 1995; Patriotta, Gond y Schultz, 2011; Etter, Colleoni, Illia, Meggiorin and D'Eugenio, 2018). Therefore, the advertising industry uses the narrative to create content and dissemination formulas to reach the hearts of consumers, making the concept of Branded content decisive for communicating well strategically (Asmussen et al., 2016). The narrative structures define objectives and engage audiences so that they are no longer merely a message in unitary ads but the epicenter of brand communication management. This leap, unfounded by the persuasive value of the narrative, offers new creative paradigms to advertising and corporate communication.

As Ollé and Riu point out, "a good brand is a well-told commercial story" (2009: 50). Therefore, it is plausible to use narrative as a creative and research tool in advertising. In this context, we have established the term "brand story," which identifies the organization and embraces corporate values and consumer interests. (De Miguel and Toledano, 2018).

This article is based on the notion that narratives are explored in the field of advertising, which we will call Brand Stories, making it possible to create more interesting content for the audience since it fosters more significant emotional ties -because the message is articulated through the logic of the narrative- which can strengthen how a brand's values or desired projections are shown and assimilated.

The current media context offers endless possibilities for using online and offline spaces to design content with a solid, powerful narrative that attracts consumers; many brands have exploited this by integrating their values within narratives (Núñez-Gómez, Mañas-Viniegra and Miguélez-Juan, 2020; Lado and Revuelta, 2021). It is a far cry from a reality in which advertising intentionality is shown directly and blatantly (Del Pino and Reinares, 2013).

1.1. Narrative approach to advertising communication

The narrative is a tool for analysis within this research approach, providing two main focuses: what it tells-the content of the message -the story-, and how it is said -its expression, the format-. However, Chatman (2013) argues that these two dimensions are insufficient for analyzing a message's underlying elements and proposes dividing both categories into two subcomponents: substance -the sensible manifestation of the message- and form -the way it is conveyed- as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Chatman's narrative categories according to the narrative's semiotic structure.

|	Expression	Content
Substance	The media to the extent that they can communicate stories.	Representations of objects and actions in real or imaginary worlds that can be imitated in a narrative medium, filtered by the author's society's codes.
Form	Narrative discourse (structure of the narrative transmission) consists of elements shared by narratives in whatever medium (enunciated).	Components of the narrative story: existing events (characters and environments) and their connections.

Source: Seymour Chatman (2013: 32).

This semiotic-narrative model provides the story's general structure to apply it to the brand story, regardless of its format. It is a meaningful symbolic creation manifested through messages on different channels and codes.

Thus, the Brand Story responds to Chatman's categories and variables but adapts them to its own particularities. It needs a symbolic story from the sphere of content -real or fictitious- that conveys the brand's values, an identity story, which we call a creative idea. Due to the contemporary transmedia scenario, an approach and format are necessary from the field of expression to obtain guidelines to make the overall message tangible, which we call creative strategy. Both dimensions must work in

unison, i.e., all the brand's messages must represent the structure shown in figure 1, regardless of the format or media delivery platform.

Figure 1: Relational dzagram between Chatman's model for any story and the one proposed for this work on the brand story.
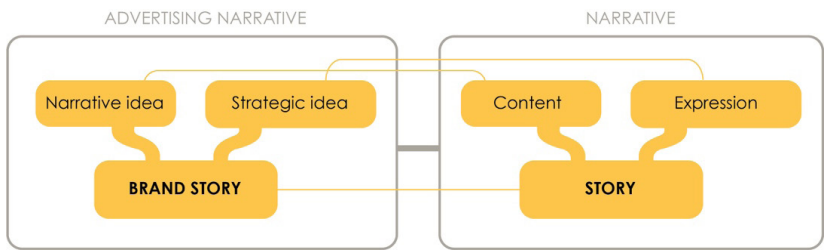
Source: created by the authors.

On the one hand, the substantial aspect of this model is called "results," which includes the operative and concreteness of the campaign's subject matter. On the other hand, the formal aspect is called "approach" since it refers to the necessary elements for designing the result. This approach to brand storytelling, shown in table 2, is adapted to Chatman's narrative model following the corporate and advertising communication approach. Based on this, we define the categories of analysis and variables that guide our model:

Table 2. Semiotic structure of the Brand story based on Seymour Chatman's representation of the semiotic narrative model applied to corporate and advertising communication.

	Creative strategy	Creative idea
Result	Subject matter: media and dissemination formats.	Storyline: social narrative of the brand.
Approach	Campaign focus.	Planning: psychological and communication axis.

Source: created by the authors.

From a narratological perspective, the creative idea is seen as a narrative universe and refers to the story's content. According to classical theories, this is composed of four elements: characters, actions, space, and time (Chatman, 2013), through which a conflict gives rise to a plot or storyline (McKee, 2019). When applied to advertising communication, this narrative is the differential storyline that the organization positions itself within public opinion. It stems from the previous definition of the psychological and communication axis and is manifested in a format according to the creative strategy.

The creative strategy, which refers to the advertising campaign's discourse, defines how the creative idea will be represented and its final expression. The strategic approach orients the expression of the content: the media and formats in which the message will be conveyed.

1. 2. *Aprendemos juntos*, much more than a campaign

The relevance of *Aprendemos Juntos* as a case study and example of a Brand Story is justified by the narrative nature of its contents, its quality, and its success in terms of advertising awards[1]. However, it also sets a benchmark in terms of quality content strategies. The brand assumes a reality; the banking sector's reputation crisis (De Barrón, 2014), as they are forced to redefine their strategies towards issues related to education, a far cry from the finance world.

The campaign obtained 450 million views and a community of almost 1.5 million people in a single year. 2018 was the best year in BBVA's brand power tracking, making it stand out from the rest of the sector in a way that no brand had ever done before. The bank led all brand metrics and became a well-considered leader among both customers and non-customers. BBVA sought to be perceived as a brand with a positive impact on society, which it achieved in 2018 with record increases of up to seventeen points (Marketing News, 2019). *Aprendemos Juntos* has become the largest educational platform in Spain and one of the most important globally, overtaking leading institutions such as Harvard University or the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the number of views. This network's community reached one and a half million people, who have accessed the bank's contents more than 450 million times. This data represents a return on investment (ROI) fourteen times higher than the investment made

in media. Moreover, this platform has already been implemented in over 5,000 schools and is used by more than 13,000 teachers (Asociación Española de Anunciantes, 2019).

The search to connect with an audience that increasingly demands brands to commit to social improvement has led to Brand Utility projects to generate content (Toledano, Selva, and Díaz-Masa, 2021).

Therefore, *Aprendemos juntos* has become a communicative reference involving prestigious professionals from different fields, where education and human nature are at the heart of it.

2. Methodology

In this context, our initial premise is that brand stories are created based on the communication strategy to build effective relationships with society and penetrate the collective imagination. So how are these brand stories created? Our main objective is to design an operative model of analysis and creation of brand stories, based on the tried and tested narrative structures in the area of communication, validating their effectiveness based on the case study *Aprendemos Juntos* from the BBVA brand, which is according to Garrido and Madrid, "the first major video platform dedicated exclusively to the world of education. A program that engages society as a whole to help find their passion and develop their full potential" (2021: 263). We set out the following specific objectives based on this study:

- To understand the strategic approach in the *Aprendemos juntos* campaign in terms of its objectives

- To check the social value of the contents created by the brand

- To ascertain the aptitude of the narrative as an integrated discipline for the audience and public segmentation and media supports

- To verify the validity of the analysis model.

The research consists of a narrative analysis based on a model, which will be applied to a specific case study: BBVA's *Aprendemos juntos* campaign. This analysis is accompanied by a semi-structured in-depth interview with one of the architects of this campaign, Ana Gómez García, Head of Brand and Content at BBVA. The contrast of both procedures, one focused on the communicative act and the other on its ideation, will help define a more specific profile of what the Brand Story represents by approaching the story in two ways: through the process and the result.

2.1. Analysis procedure and definition of the variables

The analysis model is structuralist in its conception since it is divided into different interrelated elements and involves semiotic mechanisms of transference and resemantization of meanings from a narrative perspective. Therefore, it is based on classical theories such as Saussure's (2008) or Greimas' and Courtes' (1991), among others (Pineda, 2018).

The procedure is implemented sequentially by phases or categories. Each one is given a name that refers to its function within the brand story (table 2). The definition of variables also requires specific techniques to detect their values in some cases. Each element of the structure alludes to aspects of the advertising message and its creation, as indicated below.

- Phase 1. Analysis of the creative strategy results: subject matter

We refer to the final set of campaign messages as the subject matter. These items comprise the body of the analysis, the formal subject of the research. They take on different formats depending on the platform's or media's technical characteristics and consumption dynamics. This phase delimits the universe of analysis and the study sample, allowing us to map the media used in the dissemination strategy.

The different items are classified according to the media territory: by platform or media in which they are inserted, the item's format, and the type of content.

- Phase 2. Analysis of the creative strategy: approach

We define the advertising campaign's approach in this phase, which refers to the mode of enunciation. The approach gives uniformity to the meaning and intentionality of creative ideas in advertising messages and is common to all. Curto-Gordo, Rey-Fuentes and Sabaté-López (2008) refered to enunication in terms of rigour, clarity and precision. In contrast, the model in this paper references three linguistic-artistic variables that are decisive in the story, such as a campaign's style, tone, and aesthetic.

Style refers to how the brand enunciates it, limiting terms or resources. Aesthetics describes features of the environment (mise en scene, canvas, or screen) where the messages are contextualized. Identifying

them also delimits the target audience since those lines are identified visually. Finally, the tone describes the emotional intention of the campaign and determines how the creative idea will be expressed in the final message.

- Phase 3. Analysis of the results of the creative idea: the storyline

The micro story is the storyline that captures the essence of the creative idea. The plot delimits and structures the content of the corporate messages and expresses the dynamic the brand wants to establish for the consumer. Therefore, a narrative leads to forming a new attitude or belief. Change is the nature of any narrative (Escribano Hernández, 2018), and by analyzing what changes the brand wants to promote, we find meaning in its existence and values.

The plot of the creative idea will be described through a microstory, a short story with a conflict that must be overcome thanks to the brand's action or help through their corporate values. The plot follows a basic narrative syntactic structure as seen in A.J Greimas' actantial model (1987). In advertising, this model advocates a statement based on an initial situation of lack, need, or desire that gives way to a final satisfactory situation (Pineda, 2018). Between this initial and final situation, the brand action is substantial and represents a change in the consumer's perception, which takes place symbolically.

Therefore, the plot gains value through the classical narrative structure of the actantial model, which is adapted to advertising communication by positioning the brand as a helper to the subject to achieve its object of desire and/or defeat an opponent.

- Phase 4. Analysis of approach to the creative idea: planning

This category includes advertising planning variables. Although they are the key in the campaign's creative process, they are extracted by analyzing the advertising items. These variables are insight, brand territory, concept, and archetype. We differentiate two strategic advertising axes in these variables: the psychological axis- consumer behavior model (Joannis, 1990) -composed of the insight and the brand territory-; and the communication axis -a differential feature that the brand identifies with (Castelló-Martínez, 2018)- which gathers the concept and archetype variables. Unifying both axes lays the strategic foundations for the creative idea.

In the words of Henri Joannis, Jorge David Fernández argues that "the idea of a driving force, is centered not on the product, but on the consumer's satisfaction, that is, on something that happens in their spirit" (2014: 97). In this sense, the term insight is used to, qualitatively and motivationally, define the target audience in contemporary advertising production (Ayestarán, Rangel-Pérez and Sebastián-Morillas, 2012; Castelló-Martínez, 2019).

Celia Rangel Pérez (2012) gathers several meanings of insight that are addressed in agencies by planners or creatives and suggests "true and relevant experience for the consumer" (p. 167), "a mixture of rational and unconscious components, real or imaginary, experienced or projected, which are usually deeply rooted in the consumer's affective behaviors" (p.169), or "a consumer's profound motivation to mobilize" (p.171). Given these precedents, we choose to define the advertising insight as the potential user's characteristic feature. This consumer badge captures an unconscious behavior motivated by an emotional, rational, or intuitive impulse, upon which a story can be constructed since it leads to a conflict.

The insight variable is qualitative and does not provide demographic data about the consumer. Therefore, it complements the target variable, which is the subject of study. It is also found through observation in the different campaign items like the other variables.

The psychological axis is also composed of the so-called brand territory that delimits the spaces of interaction where organizations want to be found by their audiences; they are a meeting place. We understand territories as areas of knowledge, topics of conversation, trends, or the consumers' interests where the brand aims to be contextualized in public opinion due to its values (De Miguel and Toledano, 2018).

The brand is concerned with strategic concepts and archetypes in the communication cycle. Both form the communication axis, which refers to the differential values with which the brand identifies itself and the subject of communication. They are defined based on the target audience's needs that the brand covers in this current paradigm (Castelló-Martínez, 2018). So, we understand the concept as a variable that complements the insight, as demonstrated in the advertising actantial model. The strategic concept denotes what the brand wants to communicate, the image it wants to generate to the consumer, and synthesizes the mission, vision, and corporate values.

On the other hand, the archetype suggests identifying a behavior model aligned with the concept and symbolically defines the brand's personality and communication actions. An archetype associated with a brand gives it a purpose in the social dynamics and, therefore, credibility and plausibility. Jung

(2009) established a series of personality archetypes, and we can also find descriptions of archetypal figures in Christopher Vogler's (2002) or Joseph Campbell's works (2014). However, the archetypes are embedded in popular culture and can be found by socio-culturally observing them, just like insights. We will define this variable by describing an element or instance that proclaims some value, has desires, is threatened, and/or hides fear. The brand's personality and values are identified through these variables, essential for consolidating a brand story.

Table 3. Summary template of the brand story analysis variables

Advertising narrative (brand story)	Narrative categories of analysis	Variable identification process	Variables
Creative strategy	Subject	Media map of broadcasting platforms	Formats acquired by the messages
	Approach	Modes of enunciation	Style
			Aesthetic
			Tone
Creative idea	Argument	Advertising actantial model (subject/ object/ helper / opponent)	Plot or microstory
	Planning	Psychological axis	Target and insight
			Territory
		Communication axis	Concept
			Archetype

Source: created by the authors.

2.2. Corpus of the analysis

Aprendemos juntos is digital in its conception. The web is the media territory that integrates all content, unifies and makes the creative idea coherent, and provides access to other media or platforms. We can access all the contents from different dissemination platforms from the web portal hosted on El País servers -a collaborating media-. These sections from the web page and their contents shape the corpus of the analysis:

- A mi yo adolescent: educational talks with teenagers about a specific topic in a nine-episode miniseries format. It was also broadcast on La 2 from TVE.

- Aprende a: educational material for teachers and educators. You must register to access them.

- Educational videos: videos of talks and interviews with celebrities from different areas.

- Acerca de: description of the Aprendemos juntos project.

- All the videos: list all the talks and interviews, searchable by subject.

    - Total: 239 video items

    - Total: 18 thematic categories (adolescence, talent, humanism, sustainability, family relationships, neuroeducation, teachers, teaching innovation, school, chess, emotions, learning difficulties, creativity, coexistence, relationships, communication, science, learning, technology, and screens).

- Social networks: links to platforms to support the dissemination of the campaign.

2.3. In-depth interview

The main objective of the in-depth interview with the BBVA's Head of Brand and Content, Ana Gómez García, is to compare the *Aprendemos juntos* campaign's analysis results. As one of the architects of the benchmark campaign in terms of quality content creation, Gómez explains her viewpoint on the campaign from different perspectives in the analysis. Ana Gómez's statements clarify the discussion on the results of the analysis.

Interviews are valuable for obtaining practical information and beliefs in which evaluation plays an essential role (Alonso, 1999; Van Dijk, 1980). It is semi-structured with open-ended questions focused on covering the research objectives and allowing the interviewee to nuance her responses, especially from the sphere of ideation, i.e., the author's role in the narratological approach.

3. Results. Narrative analysis of BBVA's *Aprendemos juntos* campaign

Below we outline the results following the analysis and the variables previously shown.

3.1. Creative strategy

3.1.1. Media map of dissemination platforms, formats, and type of content

The web-based format gathers all the campaign documentation and is the central repository. Aprendemos Juntos' core discourse occurs in the digital environment, allowing it to interrelate with other platforms and host different formats due to its liquidity. It democratizes access to content, which aligns with the communication campaign's tone. The summary of this analysis is shown in the following table:

Table 4. Outline of the platforms, formats, and type of content from *Aprendemos juntos*.

Media territory	Platform	Formats	Content
Main territory. Digital environment.	Web portal integrated in *El País* (Grupo Prisa). Corporate channel.	Web. Integrates text, images, video, and audio.	Information about the project. Talks or interviews with experts and disseminators.
	YouTube Corporate channel.	Video. Duration: 30 to 90 minutes.	Talks or interviews with experts or disseminators.
Secondary territory. Digital environment.	IGTV Corporate channel.	Vídeo. Duration: 3 to 9 minutes.	Talks or interviews with experts of disseminators. Fragments of full talks on YouTube.
	Instagram Corporate channel.	Video and text. Duration: 1 minute	Talks or interviews with experts or disseminators Fragments of the complete talks hosted on YouTube.
	Facebook Corporate channel.	Video and text. Duration: 3 to 9 minutes.	Talks or interviews with experts of disseminators. Fragments of complete talks on YouTube.
	Twitter Corporate channel.	Video and text. Duration: 3 to 9 minutes.	Talks or interviews with experts of disseminators. Fragments of full talks on YouTube.
	Google *Podcast* Corporate channel.	Audio. Duration: 30 to 90 minutes.	Talks or interviews with experts or disseminators. Transcription of complete talks on Youtube.
	Ivoox Corporate channel.	Audio. Duration: 30 to 90 minutes.	Talks or interviews with experts or disseminators. Transcription of complete talks on Youtube.
	Spotify Corporate channel.	Audio. Duration: 30 to 90 minutes.	Talks or interviews with experts or disseminators. Transcription of complete talks on Youtube.

Media territory	Platform	Formats	Content
Secondary territory. Conventional media.	La 2 from TVE. Media collaborate.	Video. 9 episode series: *A mi yo adolescente* Duration: approximately 50 minutes per episode.	Meetings with celebrities and teenagers to talk about different topics. Also available on YouTube.

Source: created by the authors.

3.1.2. Approach to communication: style, aesthetics, and tone

The approach is the campaign's mode of enunciation. Regardless of the format of the contents or its broadcasting platform, they are common to all campaign messages for the sake of the story's coherence. Variables such as style of communication, tone of the message, or the campaign aesthetic are characteristic features of this global approach. They define tangible aspects of the brand's personality as shown in table 5:

Table 5. Global communication approach of *Aprendemos juntos*

Style	Defines the broadcaster's mode of transmission.	*Aprendemos juntos* adopts an empathetic, humble, versatile, didactic, and approachable communication style.
Aesthetics	Defines the campaign's aesthetic.	The aesthetics that permeate the media territories are somber, digital, and intimate.
Tone	Defines the way the message is elaborated.	The tone of the messages is testimonial.
Approach	Defines how the campaign is stated.	The overall approach is educational and informative.

Source: created by the authors.

Aprendemos juntos is educational, an aspect evidenced in its claim, "An educational project for a better life." As mentioned above, these variables are found in all the content and make the campaign coherent.

3.2. Creative idea

3.2.1. Advertising narrative

We have extracted a global narrative from all of the content items by analyzing them, summarized in the table below.

Tabla 6. Actantial narrative advertising model of *Aprendemos juntos*

Subject	Target demographic	Adolescents (14-19 years old) Young people (20-30 years old) Adults (over 30)
Object	Subject's desire, need, or expectation.	A better life.
Opponent	The element frustrates the subject from their object of desire and generates conflict.	Uncertainty and ignorance. Unexpected change. Periods of crisis.
Helper	Represented by the brand through values, helping the subject achieve their object.	BBVA accompanies the subject in learning to face change, enhancing their wellbeing. BBVA learns with the subject since the entity is also affected by change and uncertainty. BBVA is humanized; it has the same status as the subject.

Source: created by the authors.

We define the argument that *Aprendemos juntos'* creative idea supports with these variables:

> An increasingly global society that has been affected by several crises in recent years seeks to improve quality of life, maintain wellbeing, and feel secure in the face of potential adversities. Given the impossibility of predicting or avoiding future disasters, BBVA is committed to changing attitudes, accepting reality, and learning from each situation.

3.2.2. Advertising planning

The cross-sectional analysis of the advertising items from the *Aprendemos juntos* campaign allows us to research the strategic variables that define the creative idea and help shape the storyline. This analysis phase focused on extracting strategic consumer and campaign, and company profiles is shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Strategic Advertising variables of *Aprendemos juntos*

Psychological axis	Target and insight	The target is diversified into three age ranges: teenagers, young adults, and adults. The shared insight to all three age segments are:: "I am worried about my future."
	Territory of interaction	Education.
Communication axis	Strategic brand concept	The active agent of change.
	Archetypal figure the brand takes on	Archetype: ordinary person, is a realist and an achiever. Desire: to create community. Fears: rejection and losing their own personality. Proclaims: equality

Source: created by the authors.

4. Discussion

4.1. Education as a brand territory

BBVA has succeeded in distancing itself from economic or financial communication with *Aprendemos juntos* by adopting a human language. The analysis of the strategic variables that support the campaign's Brand Story (table 7) shows that the brand is positioned as a social body so sensitive to changes as any citizen without alluding to the parent company's financial services. Based on this archetypal conception of the brand, BBVA manages to humanize itself and talk about what matters to people. This is reinforced by Ana Gómez when she states:

> We wanted to engage with society in a real way, to make our brand purpose tangible 'to help people reach opportunities in this new era,' which is not about banking. In this campaign, we talk about people living better lives in all senses and outside our core business. At BBVA, we are committed to education as a tool for helping thousands of families to prosper (Gómez, 2021).

In the search for commitment and proximity to society, the brand has opted for the territory of education to be an active agent in changing the social paradigm and "plays a role that goes far beyond its strictly commercial role: it takes on a socializing function (Fernández, 2011: 100), characteristics that coincide with what Roberts (2005) defines as a love mark. BBVA thus creates a global community of support in which it is an active agent. This creates a symbolic bond of intimacy, closeness, and complicity between the brand and the consumer that does not respond to reasons but emotions (Pawle and Cooper, 2006).

> Education is a universal territory, and although in the CIS surveys, it is not one of society's main concerns, with anyone you talk to -whether they are parents, teachers, institutions, young people, etc.- everyone relates education to progress. People do care about education (Gómez, 2021).

Within the education framework, the campaign deals with specific themes -sustainability, innovation, relationships, technology, etc.- which offer a greater diversity of contents and, therefore, broader

audiences and greater creative possibilities. Likewise, diversifying audiences widens the scope of the contents, as shown by the media map data of content dissemination (Table 4). However, despite the disparate audience segments in terms of age and social role, the campaign has managed to unify them under a shared trait: concern about the future. For Ana Gómez, this multiplicity of segments was a key issue from the beginning of the creation of the campaign:

> We reach out to families with valuable and inspiring content to help their children with new skills. We also wanted to reach schools by providing free, practical, and universal methodologies designed exclusively by the best experts to help and teach young people the necessary skills for tomorrow, such as public speaking, emotional intelligence, or conflict management. And finally, we reach young people because we not only talk about them and their future, but we want the campaign to be the vox populi of their concerns and worries (Gómez, 2021).

BBVA has reached their objectives through this insight and the rest of the strategic variables that have shaped a solid creative and coherent global message "to generate conversation, that people would talk about education outside of academia, that people would care, and that they could be educated with *Aprendemos junto's* useful and inspiring videos" (Gómez, 2021). This approach to brand storytelling relies on emphasizing the product's values instead of its attributes, as Castelló-Martínez (2018) and De Miguel and Toledano (2018) argue. In other words, the interest in the company's product, activity, or service is aimed at what the brand says, communicates, or contributes to society, i.e., what it gives back to citizens. In this way, the brand is situated in the realm of experience instead of consumption, although both spheres are intertwined in the current capitalist logic.

This creative process establishes an emotional connection with the user, although emotionality was not a part of the campaign's objectives, as Gómez assures: "more than emotions, we based our content on inspirational content. Once we had grown as a community and not everyone was a parent with children, our content became more inspirational and based on usefulness. We aim to connect with the needs of what society demands, rather than with emotions" (2021). Therefore, we argue that emotions in brand communication result from the content transmission, or at least they are not a fundamental strategic element when devising the content.

4.2. Narrative as an advertising storyline

The planning of *Aprendemos juntos,* together with the operational synergy of the communication and the psychological axis, is ideal for creating an advertising narrative that is persuasive in a non-invasive way. Narrative synthesis is essential for a referential creative framework and a universe of action in which the brand can operate according to its values. In this sense, we believe defining the brand's values and beliefs as a strategic value in the planning phase since they are considered an intangible value from the Brand Management perspective (Ollé and Riu, 2009). For instance, in this case study, the content themes are varied and represent brand values such as diversity, innovation, or creativity. However, they are safeguarded in an educational territory that focuses on the overall message.

On the other hand, the diversity of themes and public figures in *Aprendemos juntos'* contents are also unified in a storyline that supports the creative idea (see table 6). This storyline is based on helping and inspiring society regardless of the banking institution's business lines, reflecting BBVA's commitment to society.

> Advertising must reflect the brand's values, and if we want to be relevant, we must provide tangible value to improve people's lives. This is why brands' purposes are defined to express what they can provide to consumers and society beyond products or services. Moreover, we do not forget that a company comprises people, and social issues must be part of its DNA. Society is becoming increasingly aware, and a company's response can not be a fad but a well-planned and well-founded strategy (Gómez, 2021).

The advertising narrative delimits the brand's universe of action and limits the creative possibilities, leading to the design of unitary messages. Narratives have become expanded universes to be explored by viewers based on the logic of transmediality, and this phenomenon also permeates brands' communication, which is increasingly exploring ways to expand their advertising impact, ensuring solid messages and argumentative quality.

The diversity of content themes is inserted into this logic in our case. Different items are created for the audience to explore without consuming all the contents, so consumers are satisfied with brand values. This adequately responds to what Rogel and Marcos state regarding Branded Content as a search "for the brand's consolidation of a defined and distinctive identity, by reinforcing its ideology and style, conveying what a brand is, not what it sells: the products are temporary, the brand is timeless" (2020: 68). Diversifying themes and formats and their convergence in a standard narrative make *Aprendemos juntos* a transmedia brand story conceptualization. In this sense, as Gómez suggests, "*Aprendemos*

juntos is proof that consumers choose you when you make useful content. You can foster a long-term relationship with the consumers. The contents are an opportunity to provide real usefulness based on the brand's values" (Gómez, 2021). According to Gómez's statements, we can consider an intention to foster affective ties with the content and, as a result, with the brand. The new media and audiovisual ecosystem promote the notion of the active digital viewer, and the campaign is based on this from its conception.

4.3. An active role in public opinion

The quality of content and the educational approach of *Aprendemos juntos* positions it as a "relevant figure in the field of education in public opinion. (…) Clients and non-clients define the project as one of the most important vehicles for gaining opportunities" (Gómez, 2021). Her statements reinforce the symbolic impact the brand has achieved with the *Aprendemos juntos* campaign.

The brand has positioned its image through the educational approach (see table 5), in line with the territory it has been operating in for years (Garrido and Madrid, 2021). Gómez assures that "BBVA already had credentials to be in the education territory. BBVA's mission has always been "working towards a better future for people," which has evolved to "helping people to gain opportunities in this new era." Both speak of progress and for it to exist, education is vital, so it has always been a strategic objective" (2021).

Based on the analysis of the content's tangible elements in this case study, we find references to intangible values that make up BBVA's friendly personality. The brand's voice is based on expert testimonies in the audiovisual items, which are usually unrelated to finance. These people talk about their personal and anecdotal experiences, and the talks serve as inspiration for recipients, aiming to engage with the audience and not represent the brand's services. The brand demonstrates humility, empathy, and versatility by depicting stories unrelated to its own. *Aprendemos juntos* is an example of what Jorge David Fernández calls Brand Density (2011), or brands capable of creating messages with meanings consistent with their personality using different registers.

> *Aprendemos juntos* has become a benchmark for Spanish-speaking educational audiovisual platforms. Part of the project's success is the content and production quality. We talk about topics related to education with the top national and international experts. In a didactic and straightforward way, but simultaneously with a rigorous and scientific discourse, they help us in our daily lives (Gómez, 2021).

4.4. Audiovisual prominence on digital platforms

The campaign is disseminated in a virtual space that marks a specific action target. In this sense, the digital content focuses on an eminently millennial generation which consumers access on different platforms and mobile devices (reinforcing the ubiquitous nature of *Aprendemos juntos);* the age range is adapted to the themes of the other items.

> When we launched *Aprendemos juntos,* it was clear to us that the place where we had to show the content was where people consume and share. Now we have a new television: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube… We have full-length content -around 50 minutes- from which we extract cuts -about 5-7 minutes- (Gómez, 2021).

The platform YouTube is the primary media territory, reflected in the project's media strategy (Table 4). It is the repository of the contents in video format and the device from which it is broadcast to other primary and secondary platforms. YouTube is the technical support for creating and disseminating the brand story since it is integrated easily into other platforms. The media map is also shaped by an underlying idea of cooperation from which collaborators feed off each other. The fact that the content is broadcast on the state broadcasting channel highlights the universalist intention of the *Aprendemos juntos* campaign, i.e., the message is intended for everyone and is accessible for any audience.

> YouTube is the channel where all our content is hosted and the only one available for the entire session. Moreover, this is where our dissemination strategy stems from every week, together with our partners (*EL PAÏS* and *RTVE*). On Facebook and Twitter, we post the short versions, and they are channels where we generate the most conversation with the community; Instagram came about a year after the rest to be able to reach an even younger audience, and herein lies the nature of the channel, the formats are different to the rest of the social networks (Gómez, 2021).

The campaign's website is hosted on the *El País* website -and is also the main media territory that compiles and unifies all the items- both thematically and visually since it maintains the mainly blue corporate colors of BBVA. Different formats can be accommodated due to the liquidity of the web

discourse. We always use our channels on the remaining digital platforms, where the narrative universe of *Aprendemos juntos* is extended, thus creating social profiles independent from the BBVA brand. The secondary territories -social networks, podcasting, and television platforms- support the dissemination of the parent content and expand the possible impact to other audience segments interested in the content. However, they do not exhaustively track the consumption on the platform. Content formats are adapted to the technical requirements of each platform, but no genuine content is generated for social networks.

This strategic approach allows the user to choose the brand experience they want to experiment with and the depth of their consumption -short or extended versions, video, or audio-. Thus, the more accessible the content becomes, the more diversified the audiences are, and the brand's story broadens in scope. Again, the brand intends to convey an idea of adaptation and resilience, ultimately generating trust in the brand. As the interviewed manager points out: "In our strategy regarding the relationship with audiences, there is room for all media because we believe that each of them has its own mission and objective" (Gómez, 2021).

Video is the main format chosen to convey the brand's message for the content strategy. The audiovisual flexibility has given rise to talks, miniseries, and short video capsules to be inserted into different media spaces. Consolidating smartphones as dominant devices for accessing information and digital entertainment has redefined marketing production and communication processes in cultural industries (Pedrero-Esteban, Barrios-Rubio & Medina-Ávila, 2019). Although *Aprendemos juntos* is not a transmedia strategy in the strictest sense, it intends to be a multiplatform conscious of each medium's language and time, responding to the company's marketing department's knowledge of storytelling and the brand's multiple audiences.

5. Conclusions

The research results suggest that a commitment to storytelling as a means to innovate in content and as a quality marker ultimately benefits the authors and their communications. Brands need to tell stories that their target audience relates to; they need to "humanize" and differentiate themselves in a context with increasingly more communication inputs and diluted audiences without stimulating purchase or affiliation (Rodríguez-Rabadán, 2021).

In the current context, the brand's objective is to attract the user and make the clients or users feel proud of belonging to its community. From a relational marketing approach, this sense of belonging responds to what García says about the value of community ties in that they "unite people who share the same values, attitudes, traditions, and memories, unlike the associative ties that regulate transactions between those who need each other, even if they have little in common" (2005. 259). The power of the Brand Story idea encapsulates that sense of belonging and faithfully connects the consumer to the brand, not only through what it offers but also the people who collectively participate in this story (authors, personalities, or consumers). Ultimately, a common bond is created. The community develops other meanings within it, i.e., cross-cutting and horizontal, consolidating the main message and ownership (García, 2005).

This work has shown that if this dynamic is developed transversally and strategically through several channels, the user participates and is involved emotionally and through experiences, giving the brand its necessary value. Thus, when users show their belonging, it generates conversation. The text aims to present an operational analysis model and create brand stories based on pre-established analytical and creative categories for the narrative models within the advertising area, showing the functions that each one applies and exemplifying it based on this case study.

Likewise, it has been shown that the brand's mediatization of the participation schemes implies that the advertiser acquires advertising spaces aimed at emotion, empathy, closeness, and bonding, which are the basis of stories in general. The brand colonizes different platforms on various media in this affective bonding process with the target audience, adapting the format to the platforms' particularities (pace, framing, duration, visual and sound resources, etc.)

The current discursive formulas applied to the different informative, fictional, and/or entertainment universes empower the consumer or user (Jenkins, Ford, and Green, 2015: 188-189) and make them complicit in the narrative. The consumer is involved, and feedback is identified in the campaign's social and professional consequences in our case. Thus, a series of communicative strategies that blur the traditional vertical communication models give way to alternative, liquid, and versatile productions.

It is difficult to differentiate between brands in today's context, but some brands' characterization over others is capitalized. Our work considered that quality is generated by constructing a brand story and its own voice to make a brand stand out from the rest. It has succeeded in going beyond marketing and exploring the present. Future communicative possibilities demonstrate that brand values create strong

communities around the brand image and ultimately foster a socially positive manifestation of the brand. To achieve this starting hypothesis, the general objective was to propose an analytical model based on classical narrative analysis schemes that would be useful for advertising communication. We assume the validity of the model and its replicability in other advertising communication cases based on hybrid epistemological foundations between narratology and advertising creativity, fulfilling this action with other methodological tools such as content analysis of the case study or in-depth interviews, regardless of the market environment in which they are found.

Despite ratifying the initial ideas in this study, this work recognizes certain limitations in executing this study that could lead to new lines of research. Thus, it has not been possible to confirm that the campaign formed part of BBVA's general Corporate Social Responsibility strategy. The habitus in advertising communication demonstrates that the communication department should promote this content and actions. However, Gómez states that *Aprendemos juntos* was conceived, planned, and carried out by the marketing department, which is quite surprising, especially if we consider all the principles and variables that the campaign is based on. *Aprendemos juntos* has become a benchmark for advertising in Spain.

6. Each author's specific contribution

Contributions	Name and surnames
Conception and design of the work	Marta de Miguel, Elena Borau, María Abellán
Documentary search	Marta de Miguel, Elena Borau, María Abellán
Data collection	Marta de Miguel, Elena Borau, María Abellán
Critical analysis and interpretation of data	Marta de Miguel, Elena Borau, María Abellán
Drafting, formatting, review, and approval of versions	Marta de Miguel, Elena Borau, María Abellán

7. Acknowledgements

8. Bibliographic references

[1] Alonso, L. (1999). Sujeto y discurso: el lugar de la entrevista abierta en las prácticas de la sociología cualitativa. En J. Delgado y J. Gutiérrez (Eds.), *Métodos y técnicas cualitativas de investigación en ciencias sociales* (pp. 225-239). Madrid: Editorial Síntesis.

[2] Asmussen, B., Wider, S., Williams, R., Stevenson, N., y Whitehead, E. (2016). Defining Branded Content for the Digital Age: The Industry Experts' Views on Branded Content as a New Marketing Communications Concept. *Branded Content Marketing Association*. https://bit.ly/30BtxsP

[3] Asociación Española de anunciantes (2019). *XXI Edición Premios a la eficacia en comunicación comercial.* Aprendemos juntos de BBVA. https://bit.ly/31jog9K

[4] Ayestarán-Crespo, R.; Rangel-Pérez, C. y Sebastián-Morillas, A. (2012). *Planificación estratégica y gestión de la publicidad. Conectando con el consumidor*. Madrid: ESIC.

[5] Campbell, J. (2014). *Los mitos. Su impacto en el mundo actual*. Barcelona: Kairós.

[6] Castelló-Martínez, A. (2018). La dimensión creativa del concepto insight aplicado a la publicidad. Empatizando con el *target* de la comunicación persuasiva. En F. García-García; V. Tur-Viñes; I. Arroyo-Almaraz, y L. Rodrigo-Martín (coords.), *Creatividad en publicidad. Del impacto al comparto* (pp. 83-114). Madrid: Dykinson.

[7] Castelló-Martínez, A. (2019). Estado de la planificación estratégica y la figura del *planner* en España. Los *insights* como concepto creativo. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación, 10*(2), 29-43. https://doi.org/10.14198/MEDCOM2019.10.2.7

[8] Chatman, S. (2013). *Historia y discurso: la estructura narrativa en la novela y en el cine*. Barcelona: RBA.

[9] Curto-Gordo, V.; Rey-Fuentes, J. y Sabaté-López, J. (2008). *Redacción publicitaria*. Barcelona: Editorial UOC.

[10] De Barrón, I. (2014). La banca admite que su principal problema es recuperar la reputación. *El País*. https://bit.ly/3eOksBc

[11] De Miguel-Zamora, M. y Toledano-Cuervas-Mons, F. (2018). Storytelling y Storydoing: técnicas narrativas para la creación de experiencias publicitarias. En F. García-García; V. Tur-Viñes; I. Arroyo-Almaraz, y L. Rodrigo-Martín (Coords.), *Creatividad en publicidad. Del impacto al comparto* (pp. 215-232). Madrid: Dykinson.

[12] Del Pino, C. y Reinares, L. (2013). Evaluación y eficacia del branded content: un estudio empírico, *Questiones publicitarias*, 18, 160-177. https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/qp.45

[13] Escribano-Hernández, A. (2018). *La redacción publicitaria.* Madrid: Síntesis Editorial.

[14] Etter, M.; Colleoni, E.; Illia, L., Meggiorin, K. & D'Eugenio, A. (2018). Measuring Organizational Legitimacy in Social Media: Assessing Citizens' Judgments With Sentiment Analysis. *Business and Society*, *57*(1), 60-97. https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650316683926

[15] Fernández, J. D. (2011). Gestión de intangibles y *brand density*. Una aproximación teórica a la nueva estrategia de marca. *Revista Internacional de Investigación en Comunicación aDResearch ESIC, 3*(3), 86-103. https://doi.org/10.7263/adresic-003-02

[16] Fernández, J. D. (2014). *Mecanismos estratégicos en publicidad: de la USP a las Lovemarks*. Sevilla: Advook.

[17] García, P. (2005). Comunidades de marca. El consumo como relación social. *Política y sociedad, 42*(1), 257-272. https://bit.ly/3GFsoAY

[18] Garrido, P. y Madrid, G. (2021). ¿Pueden ser los contenidos de marca palanca para promover la transformación social? Aproximación a la iniciativa Aprendemos juntos de BBVA. En J. P. Olivares y R. Gago (Coords.), *El Branded Content en la comunicación posdigital: estructuras, aplicaciones y casos de éxito* (pp. 255-272). Valencia: Tirant Lo Blanch.

[19] Gómez, A. (2021). Entrevista sobre *Aprendemos juntos* [cuestionario online y videoconferencia personal].

[20] Greimas, A. J. (1987). *Semántica estructural*. Madrid: Gredos.

[21] Greimas, A. J. y Courtes, J. (1991). *Semiótica*. Madrid: Gredos.

[22] Jenkins, H.; Ford, S. y Green, J. (2015). El valor del compromiso mediático. En H. Jenkins; S. Ford y J. Green (Eds.), *Cultura transmedia. La creación de contenido y valor en una cultura en red* (pp. 129-168). Barcelona: Gedisa.

[23] Joannis, H. (1990). *La creación publicitaria desde la estrategia de marketing.* Bilbao: Deusto.

[24] Junco, L. (2019). Aprendemos Juntos, de BBVA, la campaña de publicidad más eficaz de 2019. *Expansión*. https://bit.ly/3eOksBc

[25] Jung, C. G. (2009). *Arquetipos e inconsciente colectivo*. Barcelona: Paidós.

[26] Lado, N.; Revuelta, J. (2021): *Chocolates Trapa y el branded content como plataforma de activismo de marca.* En J. P. Olivares y R. Gago (Coords.), El Branded Content en la comunicación posdigital: estructuras, aplicaciones y casos de éxito (pp. 231-255). Valencia: Tirant-Lo Blanch.

[27] Marketing News (2019). Cómo BBVA se adueñó de un territorio y triunfó. *Marketing News*. https://bit.ly/3xZypnt

[28] McKee, R. (2019). *El guión. Sustancia, estructura, estilo y principios de la escritura de guiones.* Barcelona: Alba Minus.

[29] Núñez-Gómez, P.; Mañas-Viniegra, L. & Miguélez-Juan, B. (2020). Branded content: Analysis of Case Studies and Measurement of Its Effectiveness Using Neuromarketing Techniques. In V. Hernández-Santaolalla & M. Barrientos-Bueno (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Transmedia Storytelling, Audience Engagement* (pp. 215-238). EE. UU.: Business Science Reference.

[30] Ollé, R. y Riu, D. (2009). *El nuevo brand management: cómo plantar marcas para hacer crecer negocios.* Barcelona: Gestión 2000.

[31] Patriotta, G.; Gond, J. P. & Schultz, F. (2011). Maintaining legitimacy: Controversies, orders of worth, and public justifications. *Journal of Management Studies*, *48*(8), 1804-1836. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2010.00990.x.

[32] Pawle, J. & Cooper, P. (2006). Measuring Emotions-Lovemarks, The Future Beyond Marks. *Journal of AdvertisingResearch, 46*(1), 38-48. https://doi.org/10.2501/S0021849906060053.

[33] Pedrero-Esteban, L. M.; Barrios-Rubio, A. y Medina-Ávila, V. (2019). Adolescentes, smartphones y consumo de audio digital en la era de Spotify, *Revista Comunicar, 60*, 103-112. https://doi.org/10.3916/C60-2019-10.

[34] Pineda, A. (2018). Análisis del mensaje publicitario. Sevilla: Advook.

[35] Rangel-Pérez, C. (2012). Modelo general para el desarrollo de trabajo del director de estrategia. En R. Ayestarán Crespo; C. Rangel Pérez y A. Sebastián Morillas (coords.), *Planificación estratégica y gestión de la publicidad. Conectando con el consumidor* (pp. 161-186). Madrid: ESIC.

[36] Roberts, K. (2005). *Lovemarks. El futuro más allá de las marcas*. Barcelona: Empresa Activa.

[37] Rodríguez-Rabadán, M. (2021). El papel de la técnica publicitaria Branded Content para generar nuevos vínculos de compromiso entre marca y sociedad. *Questiones publicitarias: revista internacional de comunicación y publicida, 4*(27), 31-37.

[38] Rogel, C. y Marcos, M. (2020). El *Branded Content* como estrategia (no) publicitaria. *Pensar la publicidad. Revista Internacional De Investigaciones Publicitarias*, *14*(1), 65–75. https://doi.org/10.5209/pepu.68369

[39] Saussure, F. (2008). *Curso de lingüística general*. Buenos Aires: editorial Losada.

[40] Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. Academy of Management. *The Academy of Management Review, 20*(3), 571-610. https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.1995.9508080331

[41] Toledano, F.; Selva, D. y Díaz-Masa, J. (2021). La transformación digital de la comunicación: nuevas fórmulas de creación, producción y distribución de contenidos de marca. En J. P. Olivares y R. Gago (Coords.), *El Branded Content en la comunicación posdigital: estructuras, aplicaciones y casos de éxito* (pp. 31-54). Valencia: Tirant-Lo Blanch.

[42] Van Dijk, T. (1980). Algunas notas sobre la ideología y la teoría del discurso. *Semiosis*, 5, 37-53. https://bit.ly/3CvXZm5

[43] Vogler, C. (2002). *El viaje del escritor. Las estructuras míticas para escritores, guionistas, dramaturgos y novelistas.* Barcelona: Ma Non Troppo.

Notes

1. Winner of the "Best integrated campaign," third place for the "Most innovative strategy," and "Great efficacy award" in the Efficacy Awards. The campaign was also recognized in Educafestival, Premios Genio, Inspirational de IAB, or el Día de Internet and the UN for its contribution to the Sustainable Development Objectives (SDOs) (Junco, 2019).

Dr. Isabel RODRIGO-MARTÍN
University of Valladolid. Spain. isabel.rodrigo@uva.es. http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8349-5093

Dr. Daniel MUÑOZ-SASTRE
University of Valladolid. Spain. daniel.munoz.sastre@uva.es. http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1136-5289

Dr. Luis RODRIGO-MARTÍN
University of Valladolid. Spain. luis.rodrigo@uva.es. http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0580-9856

Virtual influencers as opinion leaders and their use in political communication technics

Los influencers virtuales como líderes de opinión y su empleo en técnicas en comunicación política

Abstract

Nowadays, the traditional media have lost followers in favour of on-demand content and social networks, hence influencers have become the opinion-leaders of the twenty-first century. However, brands have detected a disparity between the paid or sponsored actions of influencers on social networks and their usual behaviour within their daily routine. This has led advertising agencies and brands to look for solutions, creating so-called Virtual influencers. These are avatars created thanks to augmented reality and which, in recent months, have gained ground on traditional influencers among younger audiences. With this new form of communication, brands launch messages in the form of information capsules, which will lead us to conclude that communication strategies are much more controlled. Our research considered it pertinent to use a multi-method methodology, mainly consisting of the use of qualitative and quantitative scientific research, to analyse these communicative strategies and their commercial possibilities in the current digital context.

Resumen

En la actualidad los medios de comunicación tradicionales han perdido seguidores en favor de los contenidos a la carta y de las redes sociales. Este es el principal motivo por el que los inluencers se han convertido en los líderes de opinión del siglo XXI. Sin embargo, las marcas han detectado un enfrentamiento entre las acciones pagadas o patrocinadas de los influencers en las redes sociales con su comportamiento habitual dentro de su día a día. Esto ha llevado a las agencias de publicidad y a las marcas a buscar soluciones, creando los llamados influencers Virtuales. Se trata de avatares creados gracias a la realidad aumentada, y que en los últimos meses están ganando terreno a los influencers tradicionales entre el público más joven. Con esta nueva forma de comunicación, las marcas lanzan los mensajes en forma de cápsulas informativas lo que nos permitirá concluir que las estrategias de comunicación se encuentran mucho más controladas. Nuestra investigación considera pertinente utilizar una metodología multimétodo que consta principalmente del uso de la investigación científica cualitativa y cuantitativa para conseguir analizar estas estrategias comunicativas y sus posibilidades comerciales en el actual contexto digital.

Keywords

Branded content; Brand; influencer; augmented reality; communication; advertising

Palabras clave

Branded content; marca; influencer; realidad aumentada; comunicación; publicidad

1. Introduction

Five years after the first virtual influencer appeared, their practices have become quite natural for a significant number of Internet users. Dealing with everything from fashion to new technologies, to cinema, music and even politics and social movements, the topics these new virtual opinion leaders cover are very wide-ranging. Not only can the attention of certain audiences be attracted, but also every action these virtual subjects take can be controlled. This has aroused the interest of brands and organisations with different political and social agendas which resort to their services to carry out marketing campaigns. However, they are far more than opinion leaders for different products. As they aim to resemble people and human influencers as much as possible they have embraced different political and social movements.

The use of these characters by different brands has been studied by authors such as Cillo and Prandelli (2020) who consider how easy it is for them to control the activity of these virtual individuals. At the same time questions are posed on how transparent the aims for which they were created are, there are also moral dilemmas in terms of the aesthetic cannons put forward which, in certain cases, are beyond the reach of humans.

There are also some interesting contributions made by Vázquez Sacristán, Rodríguez Hernández and Fernández Fernández (2019) on the presence of virtual influencers in the luxury sector. Other authors have focused on the role these opinion leaders created by artificial intelligence have in areas such as fashion, as with Goikoetxea (2019). Furthermore, some have even analysed this phenomenon with a case study of Lil Miquela, the main virtual influencer, such as, for example Shieber (2019) and Rodrigo-Martín, Rodrigo-Martín and Muñoz-Sastre (2021).

Most of the current works to date on this topic have focused on artificial intelligence engineering or the role these virtual beings have as opinion-leaders in fashion or music, or just as a novel and little-known phenomenon. However, there has been no extensive research into something so topical as social and political activism practiced by some virtual influencers, such as Lil Miquela. Research, therefore, is required into the role these virtual entities play, not just for purely commercial purposes but also in terms of politics and social movements.

In order to cover political activism from virtual influencers, the authors of this research shown in this article set the following general objectives:

- To define the concept of influencers in the social networks.
- To become familiar with the influencers phenomena as well as opinion-leaders.
- The following specific objectives were set to make up the general ones:
- To differentiate between real and virtual influencers.
- To identify how virtual influencers, behave and how this is reflected in the messages given on their posts on the social networks.
- To analyse the messages given by Lil Miquela in terms of political activism.
- To explain the success virtual influencers have concerning their number of followers.

2. Design and methodology

The study of virtual influencers in the field of political activism can be rather complicated initially and this must be addressed from the start in order to suitably focus on the subject matter of this research. It will also prevent too much dispersion which will not yield satisfactory results. These obstacles are:

- Difficulty when delimiting such a broad object of study with so many realities.
- The expectations created, both in describing such a complex process and explaining how it works.
- The multitude of fields it can be applied to.

Having analysed these difficulties, the purpose of this study was to examine the political activism of virtual influencers and their capacity to present themselves as opinion leaders, using Lil Miquela as a case study. She is one such influencer who has the most followers on Instagram. In this research a study period was set for the 2020 US presidential elections.

To define the subject matter of this research the authors set out the following hypothesis:

Virtual influencers are important opinion leaders among the youngest audience, capable of mobilising them, whether this be towards a product or service from a specific brand or a social or political issue.

To carry out this research, the methodology was set out in three phases in which qualitative and quantitative techniques were combined. This way, firstly, an analysis of the chosen sample was made in order to later implement these elements by observation and using instruments for measuring the impact

of their posts and contents (see Table 1). The aim of combining these techniques was to make an in-depth analysis of how Lil Miquela behaved in relation to these elections and how she used her ability to mobilize a highly interesting sector of society such as young people, many of whom had the opportunity to vote for the first time in these elections.

Table 1: Research methodology

Phase	Study	Task	Purpose
First	Descriptive theory	Contextualisation and conceptual review of the influencers phenomena	Study and reflection on social networks and the influencer phenomena and virtual influencers
Second	Quantitative, qualitative and descriptive experimental research	Experimental work	Choice of sample. Analysis of contents. Analysis and results of sample analysed
Third	Conclusive	Check the degree to which the research objectives have been fulfilled	Check the role the social networks and virtual influencers have as opinion leaders.

Source: Produced by the author

With an initial overview of the subject matter of this study the social networks and their trends have been analysed as well as the influencers phenomena and virtual influencers. This was carried out in order to establish the sample and the period to be analysed. The second phase was made up of an experimental study the aim of which was to analyse the sample from a quantitative and qualitative point of view. Finally, a conclusion was drawn from the analysis with which it was seen to what degree the hypothesis and the objectives set have been fulfilled.

The sample analysed was based on the Instagram profile of Lil Miquela, the top virtual influencer in terms of followers on this social network. The research focused on the stories posted in the last electoral period in the United States. It also looked at the content analysis and the quantitative and qualitative results. In total 53 stories were analysed, whose graphs have been researched. The contents were identified as being one´s own contents or shared ones and the intention behind the message, accounts which may be related, the tags used and how much impact the @lilmiquela account had have all been evaluated.

3. Field work and data analysis

3.1. The influencer phenomena

With the rise of the Internet and the social networks a new figure known as the influencer was born. Initially, these were "famous" people who had obtained a large number of followers on account of their main profession. That is, fans of sportsmen and women, musicians or actors became the main followers on the social networks. In this way links of affection and engagement were created.

Just as indicated by Fernández Gómez, Hernández-Santaolalla and San-Marcos (2018) "Influencers have been shaped as personal brands who must keep up a restrained discourse which appeal to the majority if they hope to grow and become established". Moreover, it is precisely these followers that those short stories whose aim is to increase loyalty are created for. As Pérez Curiel and Clavijo Ferreira put it:

> If initially the media played a fundamental part in the dissemination of fashion, today, due to the social media, trends have now been created and flow in a more democratic manner at an amazing speed (2017: 230).

Doctor Marina Ferrer López (2020), in her doctoral thesis, explained that nowadays there are infinite techniques and experts in advertising and digital marketing for gaining more followers quickly, making a video go viral or positioning a website at the top of the first page of Google. Martínez Rodríguez and Sánchez Martín (2012) demonstrated that user proactivity is a tool with great potential for increasing the size of the advertising impact. For this reason, brands and advertisers use the social networks to interact with consumers and supply them with what they demand.

Pérez Curiel and Clavijo Ferreira also mention this scene which was first observed some years ago:

> With this rising horizon a new paradigm has arisen in which it *girls*, *bloggers*, *instagrammers* and *Influencers* in general are trend setters who spread across society in a more horizontal and massive manner (2017: 230).

For this reason, the so-called *influencers arose*, a series of characters who have amassed a large number of followers on the social networks. Influencers display their lives, share their opinions or engage in activities in exchange for money. They appeared in the first advertising campaigns and became consolidated as opinion leaders amongst a much younger audience. On many occasions, the line is blurred between the activities and own opinions of the influencer and those that are sponsored or paid for. However, these activities must be considered as something lucrative and professional since "as the brand appears in the contents of the influencer posts it is not spontaneous, but rather is there due to a previous agreement which the brand pays for" (Vilajoana-Alejandre, Rom-Rodríguez and Miotto, 2019: 116).

Watts (2002) in his model of global cascades explained that rumours or fashion- just like pandemics - does not just depend on chance encounters of people with the rumour or person spreading it. They also need to be in contact with a sufficient number of the "ᵢinfected" in order to be persuaded and change their position or belief on a topic or rumour. In this way, the youngest followers start thinking, acting and having opinions that resemble those of influencers on the social networks. That is, influencers become role models for this population group.

Accessibility to the Internet and social networks, as well as the ease of choosing contents makes influencers a highly powerful marketing and communication tool.

3.2. Virtual Influencers

Recently, personal relationships, as we know them have gone through a revolution and the range of interaction people can have has enlarged considerably. At present, there are over one billion people in the world who use social networks to communicate for entertainment and communicating with other users. This means this media has consolidated its position as a significant advertising resource and must be taken into consideration. In just 25 years, digital advertising has gone from being something practically inexistent to the media with most advertising investment in Spain in 2019, surpassing television (Infoadex, 2020).

In the wake of the success of the real influencers as advertising opinion-leaders (who collaborate with a range of brands, products, services and social movements), in 2016 the first virtual influencer in the history of social networks was launched. This was an experiment which arose out of a desire to control to a large extent the advertising messages linked to the influencer profile.

Just like with real influencers, virtual ones must entertain their followers to earn their loyalty and to keep them. Casas Moreno, Tejedor-Calvo and Romero-Rodríguez describe the way in which Instagram stories are told:

> Instagram has become a storytelling platform with visual narration of activities in one´s daily lives. This application (Instagram stories) also enables one to add photography and short videos. There is also an option of adding texts, emoticons, filters, etc. This is all useful because the human brain is prepared to save information in the way of a tale. (2018: 45)

The more the messages posted are worked on, the more they will penetrate their target audience. For this reason, the agencies in charge of bringing virtual influencers to life, create contents which are similar to those found in films or television series. A life is created for them and their messages are "fed" with a specific thread in order to capture the highest number of followers possible. This formula clearly works since in the last five years, virtual influencers have proliferated, and have gained ground from human ones.

Virtual influencers have a way of life which resonates with the interests and preferences of their followers. This way, they maintain a thread of plausibility. People who interact on social networks display different areas of their life, so virtual avatars do so as well. This is why their posts are not merely concerned with consumption, but also the interrelation between physical and virtual influencers, social and prosocial behaviour and even political activism. The more varied the posts are the more plausible the avatar seems and this nurtures a higher degree of affinity with their followers. From a professional point of view, this enables the virtual influencer account to be used for all kinds of marketing activities. Therefore, interest in them in terms of their money-making capabilities has grown considerably. There are also different segmentation options for audiences with the most numerous followers.

Graph 1: Number of followers of the 5 most outstanding virtual influencers
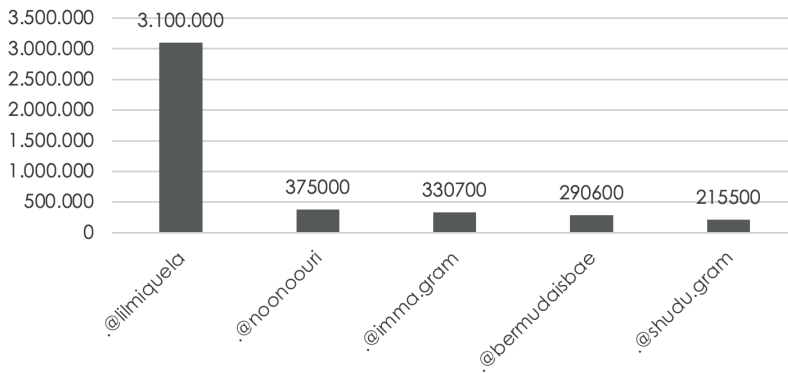

Source: Produced by the author

Chart 2: Percentage of followers who give a "like" or comment on posts
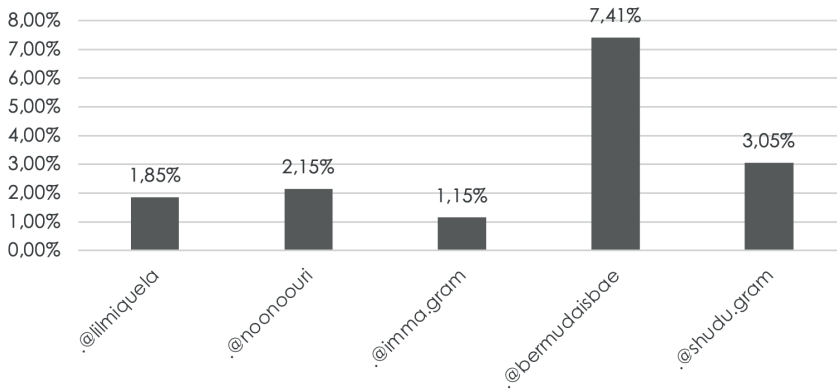

Source: Produced by the author

In graphs 1 and 2 the number of followers for the five most outstanding virtual influencers can be seen as well as the ER (percentage of audience which gives a like or comments on the posts). The most important profile in terms of the number of followers is @lilmiquela, which is why along with her number of posts (1041), she was chosen for the field work carried out in this article. However, @bermudaisbae, has the largest percentage of interactions with her followers although in the last year she has kept a low profile on her own posts.

Chart 3: Average comments on posts from the main virtual influencers
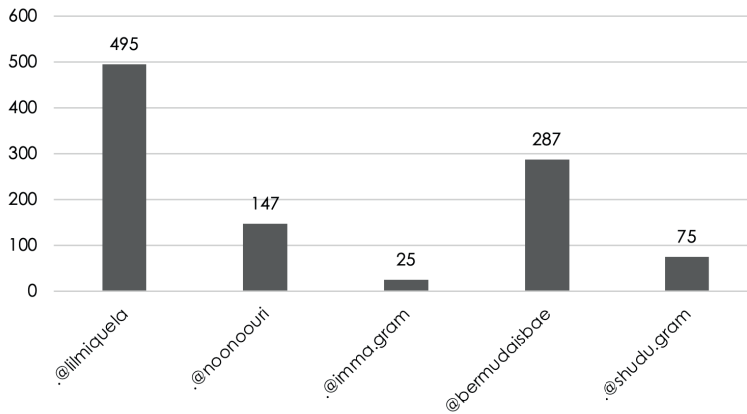
Source: HypeAuditor (2021).

Chart 4: Average "likes" on posts from main virtual influencers

Influencer	Average likes
@lilmiquela	56500
@noonoouri	8000
@imma.gram	3780
@bermudaisbae	21380
@shudu.gram	6540
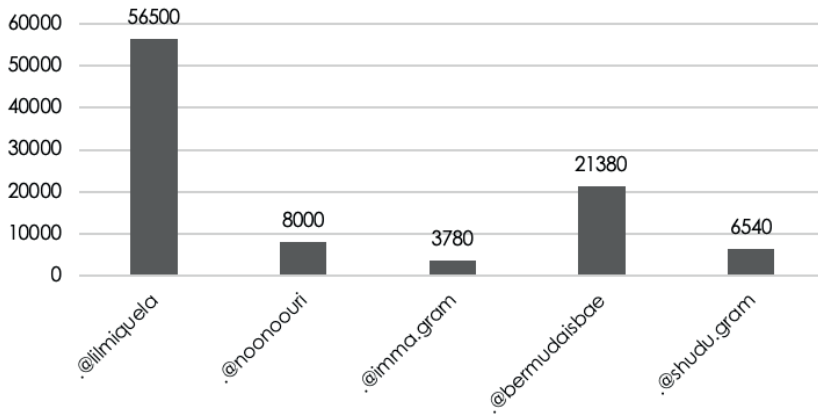
Source: HypeAuditor (2021).

If we look at the average number of followers (charts 3 and 4) who comment or click on "like"" on the posts from the virtual influencers, once again, @lilmiquela profile clearly ranks first with a wide margin in relation to the other four most followed profiles.

Working behind the scenes of each virtual influencer there is a team of over 20 people with different professional profiles. The most outstanding of these are experts in cinematographic production, 3D scanning, motion capture, facial motion capture, design and photorealistic 3D modelling, art and photography directors and experts in communication, etc, etc. All of this brings us to conclude that a new industry has dawned, with specific specialised features for bringing avatars to life with which influencers as an advertising media are created.

One point to bear in mind when creating contents on the social networks are the interests of the target market. One detailed study of followers, their tastes and the reactions they have to posts on social networks, provides the first clues for creating stories which appeal to the feelings of desire and interest. In this way, stories may be created that are adapted to different audiences. In graph 5 the interests of the followers of the main virtual influencers active in 2021 can be seen.

Graph 5: Interests of the audience of the main virtual influencers

Interest	Percentage
Art/Artists	7%
Luxury	13%
Cinema	27%
Music	6%
Business & Careers	7%
Fashion	13%
Modeling	13%
Comics	7%
Technologies	7%
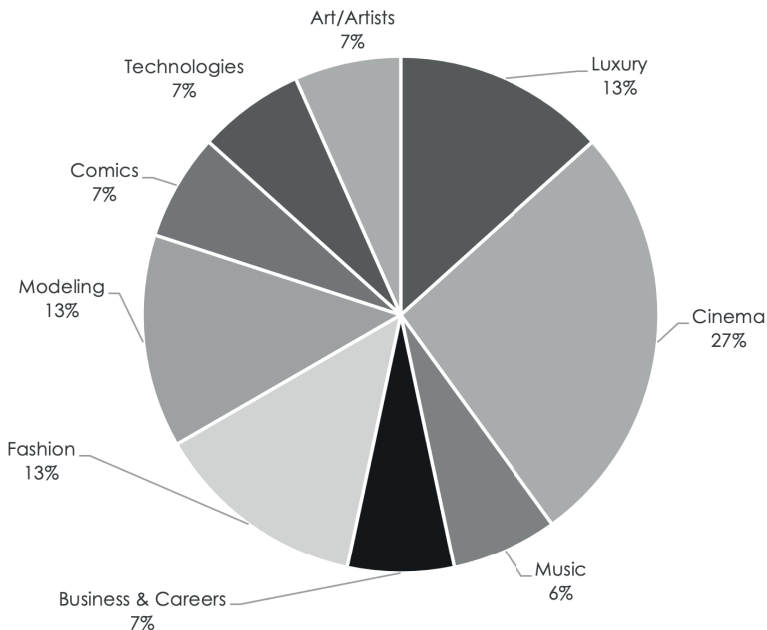
Source: HypeAuditor (2021).

If one looks at each of the virtual influencers it can be seen that the followers of @lilmiquela are primarily interested in music, cinema and luxury; those for @noonoouri in luxury, employment matters and fashion; those from @imma.gram in cinema, comics and new technologies; those from @bermudaisbae in cinema, fashion and modelling; and, lastly, those from @shudu.gram in art and artists, modelling and cinema according to HypeAuditor (2021).

3.3. General features of virtual influencers

At the start of 2021 there were 125 active virtual influencers, out of which over 50 appeared in the 18 months prior to June 2020. The health crisis we are currently going through, as well as lockdown, lead to a decline in activity for real influencers. However, virtual influencers may keep on travelling, attending events, engaging with other people and so on and so forth. This meant their stories became better known on the social networks and new profiles appeared.

At present two types of virtual influencers coexist: avatars or digital creations which resemble real people, and fantasy characters or animations. There are more female influencers than men and they are characters with their own opinions who have relationships with other avatars and real characters.

On the profiles of the virtual avatars reality blends with fiction. Therefore, the sky is the limit and one never knows exactly what is going to happen. However, occasionally the photographs and images posted may be confused with reality.

3.4. The Lil Miquela case study

3.4.1. Story and Profile analysis

On 23rd of April 2016, Lil Miquela, (brainchild of the company Brud) the virtual influencer with most followers on the network, came into being on Instagram. She is a young, 19-year-old American from Los Angeles, who in hardly 5 years amassed 3 million followers, over 1000 *posts* on her account and posted a large number of *stories*. Centred on an imaginary girl, an entire life was created loaded with advertising messages, social activism and posts with ideological content.

Just as explained by Tur-Viñes, Núñez-Gómez and Martínez-Pastor:

> We live in a society dominated by individualism, immersed in a cultural environment marked by collaboration and driven by media convergence. This is no paradox as people feel an urge to share and air their ways of seeing life, without merging theirs with those of others, without losing their uniquess as individuals (2019: 332).

The social networks make this all possible and virtual influencers reflect society, hence the success of profiles such as Lil Miquela. Generation Z is that most committed to this type of profiles, feeling empathy with them, even though they know they are not real. Perhaps that is why they attract such interest. Núñez-Gómez, Rodrigo-Martín, Rodrigo-Martín and Mañas-Viniegra explain the importance of knowing this target market in order to launch messages claiming that "Brands must research this new audience more and address them in a responsible and educational manner, because in the long-term brand loyalty will depend on it" (2020: 403). Virtual influencers are tailor-made for this generation in order to reflect their interests as well as the issues that concern them. Indeed, it might be said that the virtual influencers in 2021 are an active part of Generation Z.

Even though her profile was originally intended to always be linked to fashion, Lil Miquela has become a successful singer and her songs have been played millions of times on platforms such as Spotify or Apple Music. She earns more income than many real influencers and has earnt as much as 8500 $ for a single sponsored post. In addition, at present, it is not unusual to see her face in fashion magazines or being interviewed on different programmes. This has made her an icon for different luxury brands such as Channel, Versacce, Givenchy, technology companies such as Apple, or for automobiles such as Mini, among many other brands that appear on her posts.

Throughout her posts it can be seen how she interacts with real people or other avatars, one of the most outstanding of whom is @blzwko22, a virtual influencer also from Brud, with whom posts, interests, photography and comments are shared (Fig. 1 and 2).

Figures 1 and 2: Relationship between avators created by the same company

Source: Instagram @lilmiquela.

It might be said that these two avatars have a social relationship which resembles one between two real people. That is, there is a very fine line between reality and fiction in all cases, so much so that she can even be seen making video calls with her friends.

On analyisis of her posts, it can be seen that she dedicated a large part of them to promoting new artistic, musical and artistic talents as well as promoting social movement campaigns. These were both for NGOs and those made in December 2017 for *My Friend´s place* in order to raise funds for young homeless people in Los Angeles (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Fund-raising campaign for young homeless people made by Lil Miquela

Source: Instagram @lilmiquela.

3.4.2. Analysis of profile posts from Lil Miquela

The specific case study of Lil Miquela began initially with drawing together the posts that had been made throughout the years, in which a rising trend can be seen as Lil Miquela resonated well among the user audience on the social network Instagram.

Table 2. Data from the posts made by @lilmiquela

Year:	Number of post	Date first post	Date last post
2016	12	23rd April	28th December
2017	55	27th January	31st December
2018	296	1st January	31st December
2019	273	2nd January	30th December
2020	327	1st January	30th December
2021	79	1st January	15th April

Source: Produced by the author

Graph 6 Trend in posts from @lilmiquela

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
POSTS	12	54	296	273	327	79
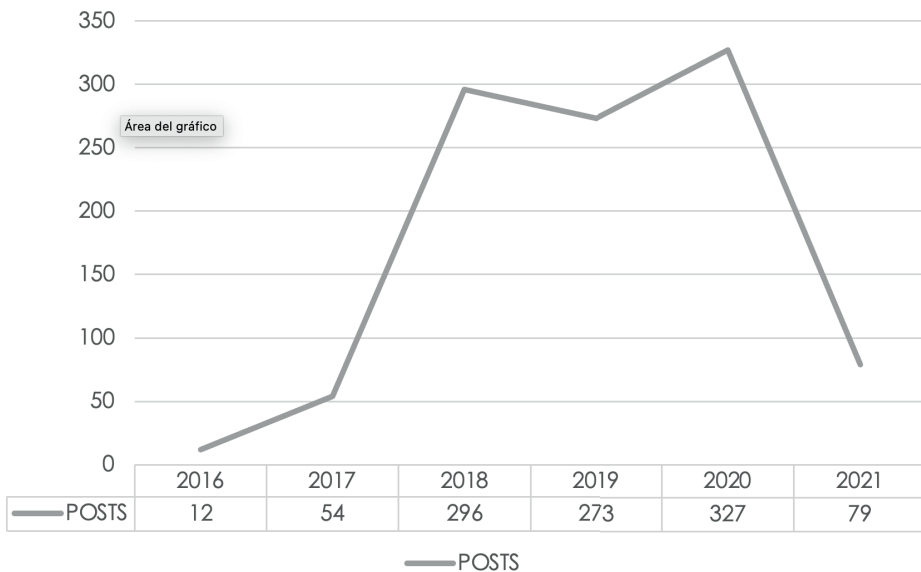
Source: Produced by the author

In her first year the account of Lil Miquela did not show intense activity, as she only had 12 *posts since April, the time at which she created the account until the end of the year*. In 2017 the profile began posting in greater numbers and reached a total of 55. However, it was still unrepresentative in relation to posts made by real influencers with whom she wished to compete.

The years her account really took off were 2018 and 2019 with almost 300 posts per year. The large fashion brands, as well as luxury products began to be more commonplace in her posts. All this, as well as the natural style and care with which the posts were made turned Lil Miquela into a virtual influencer with the most followers worldwide.

However, 2020 marked a before and after on all accounts for virtual influencers, and especially the @lilmiquela account. The health crisis and lockdown gave virtual influencers a great opportunity to compete with real influencers. In a fantasy world, the sky is the limit, as they are not subject to lockdown and may continue "business as usual". The audience appreciates this and far more entertainment content is now created with these avatars. Indeed, posts in 2020 rose sharply above those made in previous years.

Since she began in 2021 and until 15th April 79 new posts were made, 9 more than in 2020. This has led us to think that the growth in posts this year will be similar to last year.

Results

4.1. Previous considerations

Before presenting the field work of research on the activity by @lilmiquela which coincided with the 2020 US presidential elections, it was deemed appropriate to set some questions on the United States electoral system. This is essential to understanding the different stories posted by this virtual influencer on her Instagram account from September 2020 to January 2021.

The first concerns the system for making the electoral role. The minimum age for voting in the United States is 18 but, just because somebody turns 18 does not mean an American citizen can vote. To do so, one must be on the voter registry (United States Government, 2021). This is a very important point for first-time voters, whether this is because they have just turned 18 or because they have received US nationality and they still have not registered.

This registry may be carried out in different ways. It can either be carried out directly by different public institutions (Department of Motorised Vehicles, Department of Health, Department for the Blind and Short-Sighted Persons, Office for Recruitment for the Armed Forces...) or by any of the multiple institutions from the third-party voter's register. The latter are persons or entities in charge of promoting and mass compiling applications for registering voters (Florida Departament of State, 2012). Among these institutions are Rock the Vote or Head Count with which Lil Miquela has collaborated.

When a citizen registers as a voter, apart from providing their personal data (name and surname, address...) they have the option of indicating if they subscribe to any particular political party which will enable them to participate in the primaries of their party. Both personal data and this membership may be changed as many times as the voter deems necessary.

In order to promote the registry for new voter's different events were held, such as, for example, the National Day for Voter Registration. This, which, since 2012, is held on the fourth Tuesday of September and supported by different institutions such as the National Association of Secretaries for State, the National Association for Directors of State Elections, the US Commision for Electoral Assistance and the National Association for Electoral Officials (National Voter Registration Day, 2020) is not linked to any party.

4.2. Research results stories from Lil Miquela

The first question analysed was the type of message which was according to authorship. Just as can be seen in graph 8 most of the stories studied were shared messages created by accounts from institutions with whom Lil Miquela colaborates or artists who were also promoting the voter registry or participation in the general elections. In this way, out of the 53 *stories* analysed 53 were shared while the remaining 16 were created under the Lil Miquela brand name.

Graph 7 Type of message according to authorship


Own 30%

Shared 70%
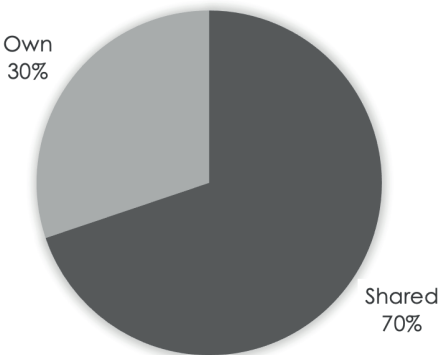
Source: Produced by the author

Below, the analysis is presented according to the type of message in terms of the communicative elements it included. In this respect, it must be stressed that out of the 53 *stories* 21 were made up of text, while the other 14 combined text and still drawings. These two types of messages alone now represent 66% of all the elements studied. The remaining *stories* contained text and animations (6), text and shared video (4), a photograph of Lil Miquela herself with a text (3), text with emojis (1), symbol and text (1), image and text (1), video and text (1) and a still image with text and emojis (1) (see graph 8).

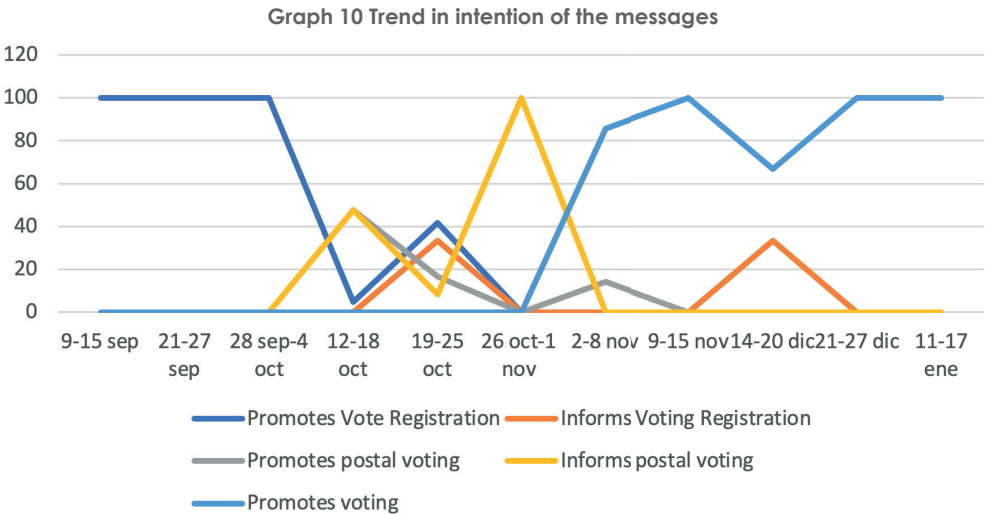**Graph 8 Elements of message (%)**
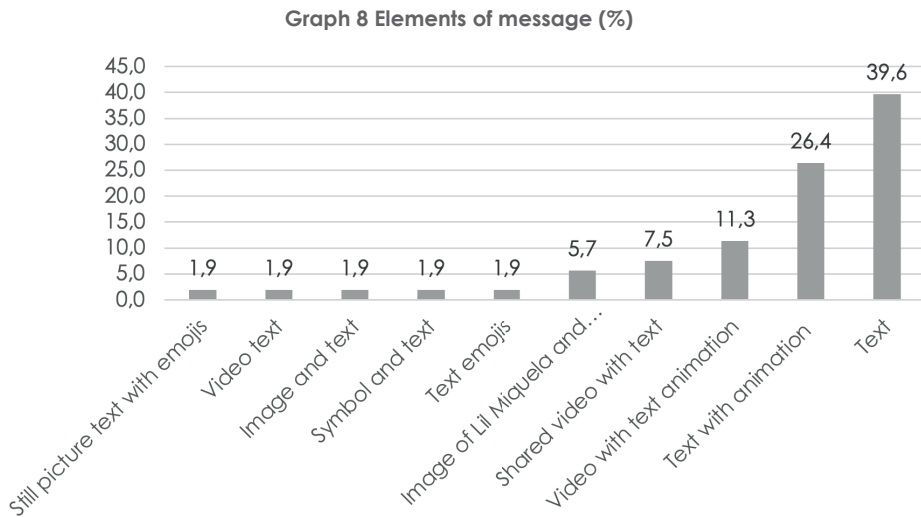
Source: Produced by the author

One of the issues which was most interesting in this research is that concerning the intention behind the stories posted by Lil Miquela on her Instagram account. 18 of the stories analysed exclusively promoted voting in general. That is, participating in the November 2020 elections while 14 just promoted voter registration. A total of 11 of these messages promoted postal voting while informing about how to make use of it. Out of the other stories, three exclusively informed about postal voting, two just made references to promoting this distance voting modality, a report on voter registration and another promoted voting while encouraging postal voting (see Graph 9).

Graph 9 Intention behind the stories
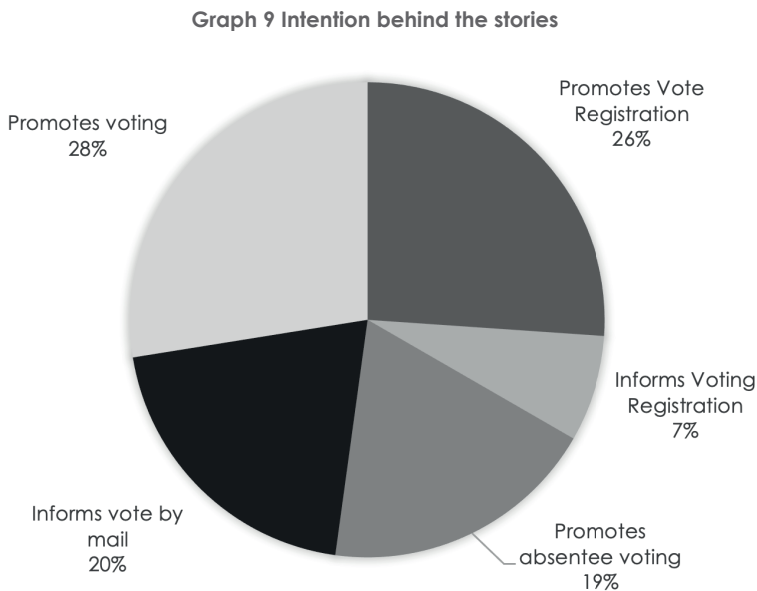
Source: Produced by the author

In the analysis there is a clear trend with the intention behind these messages throughout the period studied. This way it can be seen that matters related to promoting the voter registry is a key issue dealt with in the stories by Lil Miquela between the 9th of September and 4th of October 2020. Between the 12th and 18th of October postal voting issues shared space on these posts, while in the week from 19th to 25th of October the *stories* linked to promoting and providing information on registering to vote gained greater significance. The month of October closed with messages almost entirely concerning information about postal voting and from November onwards most posts focused on promoting voting (Graph 10).

Another outstanding point is the collaboration of Lil Miquela with different organisations linked to promoting participation in the elections. Some of these institutions are what is known as third party voter registration organisations. To be specific, there are two of these: Rock the vote and Headcounting which accounts for 54.7% of the mentions made by the virtual influencer who is the subject matter of this research. Afterwards, other institutions appear although they are not included in the list of organisations whose objectives are encouraging participation in the elections. This is the case of When we all vote or March on ballot boxes (Graph 11).

Graph 10 Trend in intention of the messages

Source: Produced by the author

Graph 11 Link to organisations promoting voting
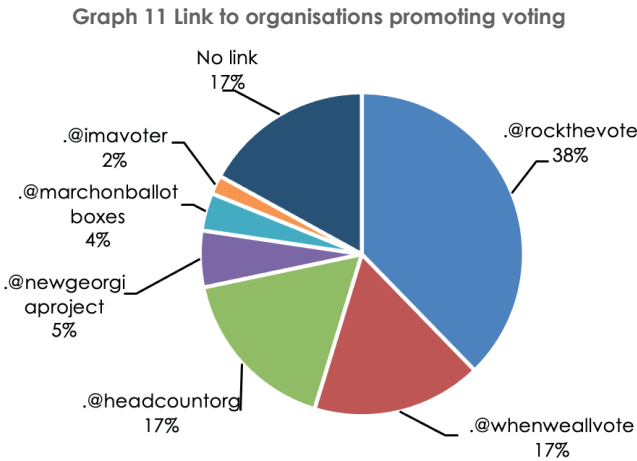
Source: Produced by the author

The next step consisted in analysing other links, apart from the previously mentioned institutions (see Graph 12). Here a large difference can be seen between the previous section in which the percentage of links with these organisations reached 83% of the *stories* posted. In this case, the percentage of posts in which other accounts are alluded to or cited comes to a mere 9.4%. Out of these, most are artists such as the actor and rapper Cardi B or the musician and writer Carrick Moore Gerety among others. There is also a producer specialised in products aimed at teenagers called We are teenager. One of the names who appeared on this list of famous people mentioned by Lil Miquela in her Instagram stories was Michelle Obama, wife of President Barak Obama and a strong supporter of the When we all vote movement.

Graph 12 Links with famous people (%)

Account	%
.@michellobama	5,0
.@teenager.la	15,0
.@sara_riff	5,0
.@litlehouseconfections	5,0
DAVIDAS	5,0
.@lili.daviss	15,0
.@camryneakes	15,0
.@sjlorenn	15,0
.@carrickmg	15,0
.@iamcardib	5,0
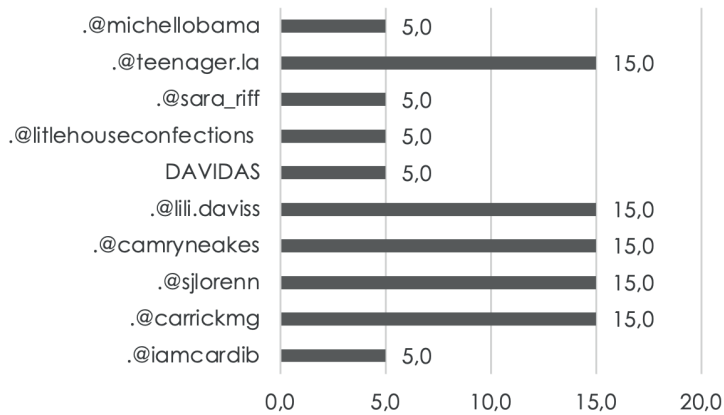
Source: Produced by the author

Moreover, a total of ten stories were found in which a hashtag or tag was used, which accounted for 18.9% of the total. This way, Lil Miquela was linked to different organisations, movements or events related to the election process. The most repeated tag was #vote2020, which encouraged American citizens to participate in the November 2020 federal elections and which appeared on four occasions. The other tags (#THEFUTUREISVOTING, #rockthevote, #NationalVoterRegistrationDay, #MoBBTheVote and #VoteReady) appeared just once (Graph 13).

Graph 13 Appearance of hashtags in the stories from Lil Miquela (%)

Hashtag	%
#THEFUTUREISVOTING	11,1
#vote2020	44,4
#rockthevote	11,1
#NationalVoterResgistratio...	11,1
#MoBBTheVote	11,1
#VoteReady	11,1
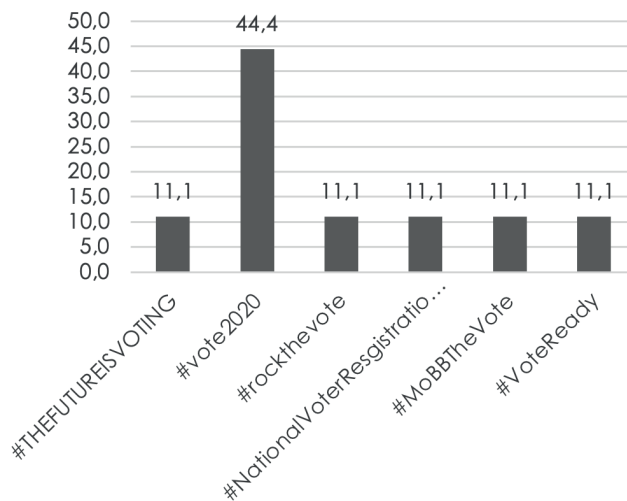
Source: Produced by the author

5. Discussion and conclusions

This study supplements the contributions from authors such as Vázquez Sacristán, Rodríguez Hernández and Fernández Fernández (2019) on the efficiency and impact of influencers. In this case they focused on the field of political mobilisation by the virtual influencer, Lil Miquela. Moreover, this research supports the questions already posed by Cirilo and Prandelli (2020), as can be seen from the analysis carried out.

Another important point which arose from the results concerns the significance of the creation of short stories which help to nurture audience loyalty, a point remarked on by Pérez Curiel and Clavijo Ferreira (2017) and Rodrigo-Martín, Rodrigo-Martín and Muñoz-Sastre (2020). Apart from the benefits derived from these stories, those which make followers proactive must also be mentioned, an observation considered by Ferrer López (2020). This was confirmed by the results of the interactions obtained in this research.

The analysis previously set out firstly, demonstrated that despite having a notably higher number of followers, the audience of Lil Miquela was not most active when interacting with the posts. It is a question of attracting attention, which is reflected in graphs 1 and 2 of this article. Despite this, this influencer was no less attractive, since her audience was unmatched by her rivals in terms of followers.

Moreover, cinema and luxury (two of the main interests the audience of Lil Miquela have) are also the topics which arouse most interest in the followers as a whole from the other main virtual influencers. They share a group of industries which their discourse revolves around. On analysing this and comparing it with the style and contents of her messages it is clear that these characters, unlike real influencers, are created in minute detail and leave nothing to chance in order to fulfil certain criteria.

As for the politicial activism of Lil Miquela analysed in this study, it must be stressed that the fact that most posts are not her own creations, but rather made by different institutions which encourage people to vote and promote a voter registry, or by other artists and shared by this virtual influencer. Furthermore, in terms of sharing the message, it could be claimed that the involvement of Lil Miquela in politics does not mean she belongs to any political party but, rather, she just focuses on promoting a registry of voters and the vote.

The domination of each of these messages throughout the period analysed coincides with the periods provided for different states for taking each of the required steps for participating in the elections. The same can be seen with tags, or *hashtags*, which were used in each of the stories analysed. On this point, there was a marked protagonism from #vote2020. They also seemed to be aligned with the timeframes and events linked to the US elections process.

Another variable analysed concerned links to other accounts. This enabled the type of relationships Lil Miquela had to be known. In this respect, how the virtual influencer provided links and collaborations with third party voter-registration organisations was observed. These were ones which were very interested in mobilising young people and new potential voters. The capacity to engage and influence the youngest followers of Lil Miquela made her a tool of great value for conveying messages to that sector of the population.

Even so, given that which has been stated above, the significance virtual influencers have gained since appearing in 2016 can be demonstrated and they have multiplied since the pandemic began. They have the capacity to lead what may be defined as "a normal life", unrestricted by Covid-19 unlike what has occurred with their human counterparts. This has become patent in the increased activity registered throughout 2020 and the first months of 2021 by Lil Miquela, who posted in a more prolific fashion in this period.

This potential for them to continue business as usual, without any restrictions from the health authorities, (apart from displaying certain specific features of these times such as face masks) has also made these characters more attractive both to commercial brands and other types of organisations. This is because the typical narratives of each virtual influencer could carry on, unrestricted by the pandemic. In this way they continued to engage with their audiences. The pandemic may have also encouraged followers to seek some escapism from the coronavirus restrictions by means of the experiences shared by these influencers. That is, to find an oasis of normality.

From an analysis of virtual influencers in general and specifically that of Lil Miquela at the time of the 2020 US elections, it may be concluded that - just as set out in the hypothesis at the onset of this research -these subjects (which were created by virtual reality) have become authentic opinion leaders among the youngest sector of the audience. Their ability to mobilise this sector of population becomes patent in the type of messages posted in their stories with over fifty of these types of temporary stories on mobilising the youngest people to vote in these elections.

6. Specific contribution each author has made (must be filled out by each author)

Contributions	Name and surnames
Conception and study design	Author 1, 2 and 3
Search for documents	Author 1 and 3
Gathering data	Author 1 and 3
Analysis and critical interpretation of data	Author 2 and 3
Draft, format, review and approval of versions	Author 1, 2 and 3

7. Acknowledgements

Translator: Toby Wakely.

8. Bibliography

[1] Casas Moreno, P. de; Tejedor-Calvo, S. y Romero-Rodríguez, L. M. (2018). Micronarrativas en Instagram: Análisis del storytelling autobiográfico y de la proyección de identidades de los universitarios del ámbito de la comunicación. *Revista Prisma Social*, 20, 40-57. https://bit.ly/3mfQryr

[2] Cillo, P. y Prandelli, E. (2020). A ogni campagna di marketing il suo influencer. *Economia & management: la rivista della Scuola di Direzione Aziendale dell'Università L. Bocconi*, 4, 75-80.

[3] Fernández Gómez, J. D.; Hernández-Santaolalla, V. y San-Marcos, P. (2018). Influencers, marca personal e ideología política en twitter. *Cuadernos.info*, 42, 19-37. https://doi.org/g3zj

[4] Ferrer López, M. (2020). *Presencia de influencers en campañas publicitarias digitales. Estudio de su capacidad persuasiva y efectividad en jóvenes*. Tesis Doctoral, Universidad Complutense de Madrid. https://tinyurl.com/2n6sh2s6

[5] Florida Department of State. (2012). *Third-Party Voter Registration Organizations—Division of Elections—Florida Department of State*. https://tinyurl.com/3brf3k9n

[6] Goikoetxea, J. (11/03/2019). Influencers virtuales, la guerra fría de la moda. *Cactus*. https://tinyurl.com/te4j65dk

[7] HypeAuditor. (2021). *Verifica al influencer antes de pagarle | Analíticas con IA de HypeAuditor para Youtube, TikTok e Instagram*. HypeAuditor. https://tinyurl.com/29stbfua

[8] Infoadex. (2020). *Estudio Infoadex de la inversión publicitaria en España en 2020*. Infoadex. https://tinyurl.com/54jwv564

[9] Martínez Rodriguez, E. y Sánchez Martín, L. (2012). Comunicación entre menores y marcas en las redes sociales. *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, 18, 589-598. https://doi.org/cj5v

[10] National Voter Registration Day. (2021). *About National Voter Registration Day*. National Voter Registration Day. https://tinyurl.com/43jw6xxn

[11] Núñez-Gómez, P.; Rodrigo-Martín, L.; Rodrigo-Martín, I. y Mañas-Viniegra, L. (2020). Tendencias de consumo y nuevos canales para el marketing en menores y adolescentes. La generación Alpha en España y su consumo tecnológico. *RISTI - Revista Iberica de Sistemas e Tecnologias de Informação*, E34, 391-407. https://bit.ly/3GuZtQf

[12] Pérez Curiel, C. y Clavijo Ferreira, L. (2017). Comunicación y Social Media en las Empresas de Moda. *Revista Prisma Social*, 18, 226-258. https://bit.ly/3jHoZlf

[13] Rodrigo-Martín, I.; Rodrigo-Martín, L. y Muñoz-Sastre, D. (2020). Storytelling como herramienta de promoción en redes sociales. En S. Liberal Ormaechea y L. Mañas Viniegra, *Las redes sociales como herramienta de comunicación persuasiva* (pp. 533-548). Madrid: McGraw-Hill Interamericana de España.

[14] Rodrigo-Martín, L.; Rodrigo-Martín, I. y Muñoz-Sastre, D. (2021). Los Influencers Virtuales como herramienta publicitaria en la promoción de marcas y productos. Estudio de la actividad comercial de Lil Miquela. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social, 79*, 69-90. https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2021-1521.

[15] Shieber, J. (14/01/2019). *More investors are betting on virtual influencers like Lil Miquela | TechCrunch*. Techcrunch.Com. https://tinyurl.com/5ypb5968

[16] Tur-Viñes, V.; Núñez-Gómez, P. y Martínez-Pastor, E. (2019). YouTube, menores y cultura colaborativa. Revisión bibliográfica de la investigación académica. *Historia y Comunicación Social*, 24(1), 331-351. https://doi.org/drds

[17] United States Government. (2021). *Inscripción para votar en Estados Unidos*. USAGov en Español. https://tinyurl.com/5y8hnync

[18] Vázquez Sacristán, I. A.; Rodríguez Hernández, M. y Fernández Fernández, P. (2019). El fenómeno de los influencers virtuales en Instagram: Impacto y eficacia en el sector lujo. En *CUICIID 2019: Congreso universitario internacional sobre la comunicación en la profesión y en la Universidad de hoy IX: Contenidos, investigación, innovación y docencia: 23 y 24 octubre* (pp. 766). https://tinyurl.com/4rn8zvvh

[19] Vilajoana-Alejandre, S.; Rom-Rodríguez, J. y Miotto, G. (2019). Retos de la autorregulación publicitaria ante los riesgos jurídicos y éticos del marketing de influencers. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación, 10*(2), 115-129. https://doi.org/g3zh

[20] Watts, D. J. (2002). A simple model of global cascades on random networks. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 99(9), 5766-5771. https://doi.org/fh2khd

Dr. Sonia CARCELÉN-GARCÍA

Complutense University of Madrid. Spain. sonialca@ucm.es. http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4166-5829

Dr. Paloma DÍAZ-SOLOAGA

Complutense University of Madrid. Spain. pdiaz@ucm.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1798-1768

Brand co-creation through eWOM: profile, attitudes, and users' behaviour

El proceso de cocreación de marca a través del eWom: perfil, actitud y comportamiento de los usuarios

Abstract

The concept of brand co-creation has been widely dealt with in academic works over the last fifteen years. Although a consensus has not yet been reached as to the definition and scope of this activity, which relates brands directly to the different stakeholders, in particular customers, experts recognise its effectiveness. Significant contributions have been made to defining the phenomenon, and to the motivations and profiles of the different publics involved in cocreation, as well as of the benefits and risks of the practice. This study was performed via an online survey on a sample of 1521 Spanish consumers in November 2020. It examines in detail their attitudes, opinion, and behaviour with respect to brand co-creation and discovers that apart from other factors, sociodemographic variables continue to be determinant in developing eWOM, the main activity in the co-creation process. The conclusions identify the profiles that are most disposed to recommend and create brand content.

Resumen

El concepto de cocreación de marca ha sido ampliamente tratado en trabajos académicos durante los últimos 15 años y, aunque todavía no se ha alcanzado un consenso en su definición y alcance, los expertos reconocen la eficacia de esta actividad que relaciona de forma directa las marcas con los distintos stakeholders, en particular con los clientes. Se han realizado importantes aportaciones en la descripción de este fenómeno, y en las motivaciones y perfiles de la cocreación entre los distintos públicos, así como en los beneficios y riesgos de esta práctica. El presente estudio, realizado a través de una encuesta online a una muestra de 1.521 consumidores españoles en noviembre de 2020, profundiza en las actitudes, opiniones y comportamientos hacia la cocreación de marca y descubre que, más allá de otros factores, las variables sociodemográficas siguen siendo determinantes a la hora de desarrollar eWOM, la actividad principal del proceso de cocreación. Las conclusiones permiten identificar aquellos perfiles más dispuestos a recomendar y crear contenidos de marca.

Keywords

Brand co-creation; eWOM; consumer's behaviour; engagement

Palabras clave

Cocreación de marca; eWOM; comportamiento del consumidor; engagement

1. Introduction

1.1 Review of the co-creation concept

The digital interactivity between the consumer and companies that began with the 21st Century has marked the start of a new form of creating value for brands. The real possibility of starting conversations between the brands and their users, establishing relations of trust, has balanced the two parties in the commercial equation and given rise to a new form of creating brands (Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

The concept of co-creation emerges strongly with the arrival of the internet, and in particular with the appearance of social media (Tajvidi et al., 2018). It has changed the rules of the game in the creation of brand value. The origin itself of the term co-creation creates a new way of understanding the logic of marketing in the 21st Century, which has evolved from materiality to the intangibility of its activity of promoting goods and services (Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

Prahalad and Ramaswarny (2004) defined the concept of co-creation as collaboration between the customer and supplier in the activities of creating an idea, design or development of new products or services. It is not an effort by the company to satisfy the customers, but a joint effort in which both parties end up winning.

The core element of relations between the customers and the company in the co-creation processes modifies the very idea of brand value, dynamising the processes and increasing the importance of individual and collective experiences. Subsequent studies have demonstrated that the process of brand co-creation does not only involve the consumers, but also other stakeholders such as employees, suppliers, sponsors, local communities etc. (Sarkar and Banerjee, 2019; Tjandra et al., 2020).

Table 1: Clarification of the concept of co-creación according to Prahalad and Ramaswamy

What co-creation is not	What co-creation is
Customer focus	Co-creation is about joint creation of value by the company and the customer. It is not the firm trying to please the customer
Customer is king or customer is always right	Allowing the customer to co-construct the service experience to suit his/her context
Delivering good customer service or pampering the customer with lavish customer service	Joint problem definition and problem solving
Mass customisation of offerings that suit the industry's supply chain	Creating an experience environment in which consumers can have active dialogue and co-construct personalised experiences; product may be the same but customers can construct different experiences
Transfer of activities from the firm to the customer as in self-service	Experience variety
Customer as product manager or co-designing products and services	Experience of one
Product variety	Experiencing the business as consumers do in real time
Segment of one	Continuous dialogue
Meticulous Market research	Co-constructing personalised experiences
Staging experiences	Innovating experience environments for new co-creation experiences
Demand-side innovation for new products and services	

Fuente: Prahalad y Ramaswarny (2004)

The DART model for constructing brand value through co-creation designed by Prahalad and Ramaswarny in 2004, is recognised and accepted by the research community (Hatch and Schultz. 2010; Hsieh and Chang, 2016; Seiler et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2018; Tajvidi et al., 2018; Iglesias et al., 2020; Muñoz and Díaz Soloaga, 2020). This model is based on four pillars: dialogue, access, risk-benefits and transparency.

Hatch and Schultz (2010) proposed a simplified version of the DART model with two axes: the commitment between the company and its stakeholders (dialogue + access) and the information provided by the company (risk-benefits + transparency). They concluded that the companies have a growing interest to offer multiple channels in order to create a greater commitment between the company and its stakeholders.

Nearly fifteen years after the first conceptualisation of the term, Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2018) offered a new definition of the concept of co-creation (Chart 1) as the process of interactional creation across interactive system-environments (afforded by interactive platforms) entailing agency engagements and structuring organisations. This creation is carried out thanks to the interactions of "agential assemblages". The members of the organisations allow and at the same time constrain the interactions. The interactive platforms and agents that use them are composed of heterogeneous relations of artefacts, processes, interfaces and persons. Aided by digital technologies, interactive platforms afford a multiplicity of interactive environments that connect creations with the results that emerge from their relational activity.

Chart 1. Co-creation process
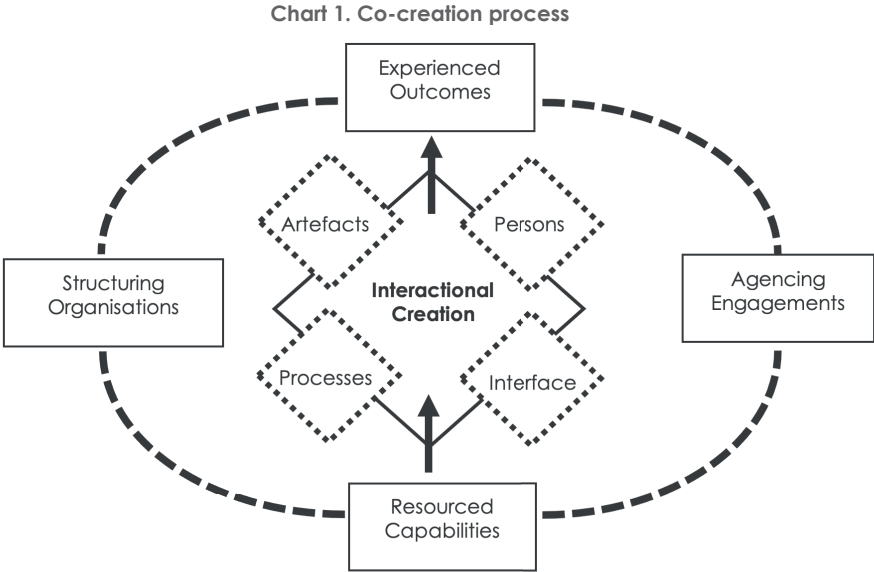
Source: Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2018)

While we recognise the validity of the model proposed by the authors, it is excessively academic, given that the authors assign equal importance to the four elements involved in the co-creation process: artefacts, persons, processes and interfaces. Our focus leads us to grant a greater importance to persons, as the activity of users (consumers, customers or recipients) is the true artifice of interaction, which finally concludes the creative process.

By positioning the user at the centre of the dynamic interactive process, it establishes an open and ongoing dialogue with consumers. This process is capable of generating improvements and changes in business activity through interactive dynamics of process-exchange. It acquires an important role, allowing co-creation to be understood in our opinion as the user.

We will now examine electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) as the specific form in which companies and consumers relate and establish co-creation.

1.2 Co-creation and eWOM

Poturak and Softic (2019) define eWOM as any informal communication targeted at consumers through the Internet, relating to the use or features of certain goods or services, or of their distributors.

eWOM is associated with viral marketing and thus with the possibility of creating virtual relationships and communities that have an influence beyond the producers of these contents. There are studies that relate eWOM positively to purchase intent, with an even greater effect than advertising. They have detected that a large number of consumers depends on the recommendations of eWOM when making their purchasing decisions (Tseng et al., 2013; Tajvidi et al., 2018).

In 2015, Zhang, Lu, Wang and Wu offered an original model of co-creation which relates the stimuli, experiences and responses, highlighting certain areas that are more effective in creating the desired experiences in customers: the visual attractiveness of a website is key and care must be taken with appropriate use of fonts, colours, backgrounds and images, as well as high-quality audio, animations, info-graphics and videos. Ideally, the virtual projection of products must allow a practical and almost real experience of them. To do so, websites must focus on increasing the synergy between the information on the site and the customers' objectives, rather than only caring about the extent and depth of the product-related content.

Surprisingly, the efforts of companies to mitigate the negative effects of crisis situations (such as the withdrawal of products from the market) have little effect and the results are almost non-existent (Hsu and Lawrence, 2016), due to the impact of co-creation by customers. This does not mean that companies should not respond to these crises; but their impact on brand value will not be apparent in the short term, and will be practically non-existent while the crisis lasts.

Along the same lines, Relling et al. (2016) analysed the positive and negative comments by consumers on a brand's social media site to discover how the community itself can influence users. To do so, they differentiated two types of customers: (1) Customers who are brand fans: they follow it emotionally and they like to share their passion for the brand with others (social goal community); and (2) Rational brand customers: they follow it for functional reasons and look for information and knowledge about the product and brand features (functional goal community). In this study the results suggested that both negative and positive comments have a different affect according to the type of community. Negative comments have less effect on the community of fans of the brand than on the rational customers. Negative comments are valued more by the rational community, as they provide them with more information, credibility and trust with respect to the brand; while positive comments provoke a bigger response and participation among the fan community.

Balaji, Khong and Chong (2016) identified three types of factors that determine negative eWOM on the social media in the case of product sales: (1) factors in the digital purchase and sale context; (2) individual factors; and (3) factors related to social media. When comparing eWOM with traditional word of mouth, although consumers initially value both the digital content and the offline content, over time they value the digital reviews less (Ransbotham, Lurie and Liu, 2019). This is because digital co-creation reduces reflection, tends to be anchored in the present and is perceived as of less value.

The real experience of companies appears to demonstrate that the most frequent type of experience of co-creation, ahead of other more desirable forms such as product co-creation, is eWOM.

1.3 Co-creation and consumer's behaviour

There are two major theories that explain this by examining the psychological benefits and motivations of consumers in the brand co-creation process (Hsieh and Chang, 2016): self-determination theory and implicit self-esteem theory. In both cases what is highlighted is that (1) a strong connection with the brand facilitates the brand co-creation commitment; (2) the personal competence or skill in the co-creation tasks are positively associated with brand engagement; and (3) the work of brand co-creation that contributes a perception of relationship or affinity between the members of the co-creation team also facilitate a brand engagement, which in turn (4) increases the purchasing intention and other positive activities for the brand.

Cossío-Silva et al. (2016) examined co-creation of brand value and its effect on loyalty to the organisation from the point of view of consumer attitude and conduct. This involves understanding the creation of value in the context of purchases and consumption by customers, given that consumers are not passive subjects of marketing actions, but rather participate actively in the process. These mechanisms extend the traditional focus and show co-creation to be a business concept where the boundaries between companies and customers become blurred due to the redefinition of their roles.

The co-creation interactions between the members of online communities help develop relationships and increase perceived brand loyalty (Hajli et al. 2017). But at the same time, co-creation may expose brands to the danger of losing control over part of the message of the brand, dilute the sense of ownership, endanger corporate values or generate a desynchronisation between the voices of stakeholders (Erdem et al., 2016; Schmeltz and Kjeldsen, 2019).

Pagani and Malacarne (2017) introduce new concepts that connect brand co-creation with other areas such as (1) experiential engagement; (2) personal engagement; and (3) social interactive engagement, as well as the relations between the three. In the digital sphere a number of authors define the creation of engagement as the set of experiences that users have with a specific online medium or support. These experiences differ according to how and for what each medium or support is used. Thus, a distinction is made between a personal connection and a social interaction connection (Calder et al. 2009). A personal connection is made when the user acts in search of a stimulus, inspiration or reflection about their own values, while the social interaction connection occurs when the user's intent is socialisation and participation in an online community through blogs or forums. Li and Bernoff (2008) create user types based on online behaviour (active and passive). "Spectators" are passive actors who consume that which the other users produce, while "creators", "critics", "collectors" or "joiners" behave actively.

Black and Veloutsou (2017) explored the interrelations between brand identity, consumer identity and the brand community in the co-creation process. They discovered that when consumers interact with brands, they not only co-create but also create brand identity, while expressing their own identity through active support to its offerings. Brand, individuals and brand community borrow their identities.

Merz et al. (2018) created a scale for measuring the customer co-creation value (CCCV), based on two factors: (1) customer resources; and (2) customer motivation. The first factor includes the following dimensions: (1) brand knowledge; (2) abilities/capacities of the brand itself; (3) brand creativity; and (4) brand connectivity. The second factor is divided into: (1) passion for the brand; (2) trust in the brand; and (3) commitment to the brand. The customers who show the highest CCCV values are those who respond most positively to the brand: they are more prepared to help the brand, post positive comments on the brand, pay a higher price for the product and even present a greater purchasing intention.

With respect to the corporate perspective, Essamri, McKeachnie and Winklhofer (2019) conclude that the executives interested in strengthening the corporate dimension of the brand must have a participative style and work jointly with the consumers through co-creation processes.

Iglesias et al., 2020 paid attention to the link between corporate social responsibility, consumer trust and brand loyalty through the co-creation processes. They came to the conclusion that co-creation represents a great opportunity for service brands, as it helps them reconvert CSR actions into loyal customers.

2. Objectives of the study and methodology

The main purpose of this study is to find out how the customer perceives the brand co-creation process from three different aspects: the level of involvement, participation and interaction with the brand on the Internet, as well as its possible influence on the purchase decision process.

With respect to the specific objectives, the aim is:

- to study the attitudes and behaviour of individuals in the eWOM-linked co-creation process.

- to propose an explanatory model related to the predisposition to brand co-creation based on the sociodemographic and economic characteristics of individuals.

We have applied a cross-cutting descriptive and explanatory design, with the population of the study being a set of Spanish individuals aged 18 and over, according to the Spanish population census. The sample size is 1,521 individuals, with an estimated error in the case of applying a simple random sample of ±2,5% for a confidence level of 95.5% (P=Q= 50%).

With respect to the sample profile, composed according to sociodemographic and economic characteristics, 49.5% are men and 50.5% are women. As to the age variable, as can be seen in the following table the sample has been divided into 6 age bands distributed according to the Spanish population census (see Table 1).

Table 1. Sample distribution by age intervals

Age intervals	Percentage
18-24	12.2
25-34	15.2
35-44	22.4
45-54	20.2
55-64	17.0
65 and over	13.0
Total	100.0

Source: own work.

The following tables (2 and 3) show the sample distribution according to income level and educational level.

Table 2. Sample distribution by income level

Income level ("if the average level is €1,000 per month, the income level is"	Percentage
Far above average	6.6
Above average	41.0
Average	21.9
Below average	9.8
Far below average	5.6
D/K	14.0
Total	98.8
Missing	1.2
	100.0

Source: own work

Table 3. Sample distribution by individual's educational level

	Percentage
Primary education not complete	0.8
Primary (school certificate (1st stage of EGB), more or less 10 years old)	3.1
Secondary School 1st Cycle (School leaving certificate or 2nd stage of EGB, 1st and 2nd ESO, 1st cycle: to 14 years)	7.3
Secondary School 2nd Cycle (1st and 2nd vocational training, higher baccalaureate, BUP, 3rd and 4th of ESO (2nd cycle), COU, PREU, 1st and 2nd year Baccalaureate)	37.1
Third Level. 1st Cycle (Equivalent to Technical Engineer, 3 years, University Schools, Technical Engineers, Architecture)	16.0
University Diploma, B.A. 2nd Cycle (University, Higher B.A., technical high schools and faculties, etc.)	21.0
Third Level (Master's)	12.7
Third Level (Doctorate)	2.0
Total	100.0

Source: Own work

The information was collected by an online questionnaire created for this purpose. To define the variables in the survey, a focus group was created that identified 13 observables variables divided into 3 blocks. The different variables for analysis are explained below:

- Attitudes related to the level of participation of individuals in the co-creation process through eWOM:
    - The simplest/most basic level of engagement through eWOM:
        - Variable 1: "I am prepared to recommend and share my purchasing experience with my friends through ratings/reviews"
        - Variable 2: "I am prepared to recommend a product of a brand that is worth buying for my friends"
        - Variable 4: "I'm prepared to give suggestions in my social media when my friends need my advice on purchasing a product"
        - Variable 7: "When a product doesn't satisfy me, I tend to post a critical review"
    - The most complex level of engagement through eWOM:
        - Variable 8: "I've taken part in the creation of a new product"
        - Variable 9: "I've participated in the creation of specific content for a brand"
- Attitudes related to the interaction between the company and the user through eWOM:
    - Variable 3: "I like it when the brand website listens to my comments and answers them when necessary"
    - Variable 6: "I like interacting with my favourite brands and give them my opinion on new items they launch on the market"
    - Variable 12: "Small companies consult consumers more"
- Attitudes related to the relationship between eWOM and its involvement in the purchasing process:
    - Variable 5: "When it comes to buying a brand, I take into account the purchasing experience of my friends shared via social media"
    - Variable 10: "I buy more products of brands that take my comments into account"
    - Variable 11: "I've discovered new brands thanks to the interaction of other users"
    - Variable 13: "I make my purchasing decisions based on the opinions of other consumers"

A 5-position scale has been used in all cases (1=Disagree strongly, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Agree strongly).

The information was collected in November 2020. The data obtained has been analysed using the statistical package SPSS version 25.0 (IBM Corp., 2017).

With respect to the methodology for analysis, univariate and bivariate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques such as the Chi squared test were used, as well as the logistic multivariate regression technique for specifying the explanatory model.

3. Results

3.1 General attitudes to the brand co-creation process

The results have been presented after recodifying the variables into three categories for facilitating their interpretation: the first category groups together the ratings 1=Strongly disagree and 2=Disagree; the second category refers to the value 3=Neither agree nor disagree, and the third groups the ratings 4=Agree and 5=Strongly agree.

Given the results, as can be observed in table 4, a high percentage (more than half of those surveyed) shows an attitude favourable to the co-creation processes when they are linked to eWOM (66% are prepared to recommend a brand that is worth it and 52% to recommend and share the purchasing experience). This percentage declines slightly when the attitude is linked to the idea of posting a negative comment if the product has not satisfied the person's expectations (41% agree with this statement compared with 24.9% that declare the contrary and 34.2% neither agree nor disagree), as happens with the variable related to posting suggestions on social media to offer advice in the purchasing process of another person (42.3% agree, while 24.2% disagree and 33.5% neither agree nor disagree).

Although recommendation through eWOM is widely accepted by most of the population, it is interesting to observe that when the level of co-creation requires a greater involvement by the individual, the contrary effect occurs, i.e. the percentage of people who are not prepared to make this creative effort increases (only 17.9% of those surveyed declare they have participated in the process of creating a new product for a company and 24.9% in a process of creating specific content for a brand).

With respect to the variables related to the process of interaction created between a company and its public through eWOM, it should be noted that nearly 60% of those surveyed like being taken into

account by their brands, and like for them to listen and respond when necessary. However, only 28% say that they like to interact with a brand and give it their opinion when the brand requests it. Also, with respect to the perception of what type of company promotes participation and dialogue with its customers most, only 38% believe that they are mainly SMEs.

Finally, when analysing the association between eWOM and the purchasing decision process of a brand, 40% of those surveyed note that their purchasing decision depends on the opinions of other consumers. This percentage increases to 50% when the opinion is in the social media of friends and acquaintances. Moreover, thanks to the interaction that other users have with some brands, new products can be publicised among consumers (nearly 50% of those surveyed have been made aware of the existence of new brands due to the comments of other users). Finally, the interaction and response of a brand to a customer's comments generates a positive attitude to the possible purchase, as a third of those surveyed are more likely to buy a product if it has taken into account their comments or suggestions.

Table 4. Attitudes to co-creation

Attitudes to co-creation through eWOM	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree
1. I am prepared to recommend and share my purchasing experience with my friends through ratings/reviews	16.2	31.7	52.1
2. I am prepared to recommend a product of a brand that is worth buying for my friends	10.4	23.4	66.2
3. I like that the brand's website listens to my comments and answers me when necessary	11.6	30.3	58.1
4. I am prepared to make suggestions in my social media when my friends need my advice on the purchase of a product	24.2	33.5	42.3
5. When it comes to buying a brand, I bear in mind the purchasing experience my friends have shared on social media	18.8	31	50.2
6. I like interacting with my favourite brands and giving them my opinion about what's new on the market	29.3	42.7	28.1
7. When a product does not satisfy me, I tend to post a critical review	24.9	34.2	41
8. I have participated in the creation of a new product	53.4	28.7	17.9
9. I have participated in the creation of specific content for a brand	43.3	31.9	24.9
10. I buy more products from brands that take my comments into account	20.2	45.5	34.3
11. I have discovered new brands thanks to my interaction with other users	20.2	31.6	48.1
12. Small companies consult consumers more	15	46.5	38.5
13. I make my purchasing decisions based on the opinions of other consumers	26.4	32.9	40.6

Source: Own work

3.2 The profile of co-creator by demographic variables

Next, we determined whether or not there was a statistical association (by cross-tabulation analysis with the Chi-squared test) between the declared attitude to co-creation and certain sociodemographic and economic characteristics of the individual: gender, age, income level and educational level.

Next, we present the results for each of the traditional classification variables. The first classification variable is age. In general the most favourable attitude to co-creation is significantly more associated with middle-aged and young people. In all the attitudes studied, the least favourable predisposition to co-creation and eWOM is significantly more associated with having been over 65 years of age (see Table 5).

In the first block of attitudes related to co-creation through eWOM, the middle-aged segment (35 to 44 years) is significantly more likely to recommend or share its purchasing experience with others; and

together with the youngest segment (18-24 years) they are the most likely to post suggestions on social media. Finally, the middle-aged and older segment (34 to 64 years) agree slightly more with the idea of posting a criticism of a product if it has not met their expectations.

When the co-creation process requires greater participation and involvement by the individual, the youngest segment (18 to 24 years) is the most in favour of contributing to the creation, whether of a new product or a more elaborate content for a brand.

In the second block of attitudes related to the interaction between company and users, individuals aged 35 to 64 are those who are most interested in a brand listening to them and answering them when required. The youngest segment (18 to 24 years) agrees significantly more with the perception that the SMEs encourage users most to participate in the co-creation process; and are more in favour of interacting with their brands and contributing ideas to the brands when they ask their customers to do so.

Finally, in the block related to the process of co-creation and product purchase, in general it is the segment aged between 25 and 44 that most prepared to be guided in their purchasing decision by the comments of other persons or the experience of other users shared on social media. This segment of the population has also discovered new brands thanks to interaction with other users through posts on the Internet. Finally, the public aged between 35 and 64, as was the case before, values a brand for taking into account their comments, encouraging them to include it in their purchasing decision process.

Table 5. Attitudes to co-creation and age

Attitudes to co-creation		Age							Chi-squared	Significance
		18-24 %	25-34 %	35-44 %	45-54 %	55-64 %	+65 %	Total %		
I am prepared to recommend/share my purchasing experience with my friend through ratings/ reviews	Disagree	12.9%	13.9%	17.1%	13.6%	17.4%	23.4%	16.2%	26.150	0.004*
	Neither agree nor disagree	35.5%	34.2%	24.1%	33.1%	32.0%	35.5%	31.7%		
	Agree	51.6%	51.9%	58.8%	53.2%	50.6%	41.1%	52.1%		
I like the brand to listen to me and answer when necessary	Disagree	11.3%	10.4%	9.4%	10.4%	12.4%	17.8%	11.6%	28.702	0.001**
	Neither agree nor disagree	40.9%	31.6%	28.5%	28.2%	24.3%	33.0%	30.3%		
	Agree	47.8%	58.0%	62.1%	61.4%	63.3%	49.2%	58.1%		
I am prepared to make suggestions on my social media when my friends need my advice on the purchase of a product	Disagree	17.7%	19.9%	22.4%	21.8%	29.0%	36.0%	24.2%	35.986	0.000**
	Neither agree nor disagree	33.3%	37.7%	31.8%	33.1%	30.5%	36.0%	33.5%		
	Agree	48.9%	42.4%	45.9%	45.1%	40.5%	27.9%	42.3%		
When buying a brand I take into account the purchasing experience my friends have shared on social media	Disagree	14.0%	11.3%	15.9%	19.2%	22.0%	32.5%	18.8%	61.005	0.000**
	Neither agree nor disagree	37.1%	29.0%	28.5%	29.2%	29.0%	37.6%	31.0%		
	Agree	48.9%	59.7%	55.6%	51.6%	49.0%	29.9%	50.2%		
I like interacting with my favourite brands and giving them my opinion about what's new on the market	Disagree	26.3%	26.0%	27.1%	26.6%	34.4%	37.1%	29.3%	19.745	0.032*
	Neither agree nor disagree	40.9%	45.5%	42.2%	46.8%	38.6%	42.6%	42.7%		
	Agree	32.8%	28.6%	31.8%	26.6%	27.0%	20.3%	28.1%		
When a product doesn't satisfy me, I tend to post a critical review of my experience	Disagree	22.6%	23.8%	23.2%	22.4%	24.7%	35.0%	24.9%	33.004	0.000**
	Neither agree nor disagree	40.3%	43.3%	30.3%	34.4%	29.0%	31.0%	34.2%		
	Agree	37.1%	32.9%	46.5%	43.2%	46.3%	34.0%	41.0%		

									Chi-squared	Significance
I have participated in the creation of some new product	Disagree	36.6%	51.9%	53.2%	55.5%	56.4%	64.0%	53.4%		
	Neither agree nor disagree	37.6%	30.3%	25.0%	27.9%	27.0%	27.9%	28.7%	42.500	0.000**
	Agree	25.8%	17.7%	21.8%	16.6%	16.6%	8.1%	17.9%		
I have participated in the creation of specific content for a brand	Disagree	33.3%	40.3%	41.5%	42.9%	46.3%	55.8%	43.3%		
	Neither agree nor disagree	38.7%	34.2%	31.2%	29.9%	29.7%	29.9%	31.9%	28.315	0.002*
	Agree	28.0%	25.5%	27.4%	27.3%	23.9%	14.2%	24.9%		
I buy more products from brands that take my comments into account	Disagree	16.7%	15.6%	20.3%	17.2%	21.6%	31.5%	20.2%		
	Neither agree nor disagree	48.9%	48.5%	42.6%	46.8%	42.1%	46.2%	45.5%	29.670	0.001**
	Agree	34.4%	35.9%	37.1%	36.0%	36.3%	22.3%	34.3%		
I have discovered new brands thanks to the interaction of other users	Disagree	14.5%	16.5%	17.4%	17.5%	22.5%	32.5%	20.2%		
	Neither agree nor disagree	33.9%	29.4%	28.2%	32.8%	32.4%	35.0%	31.6%	45.168	0.001**
	Agree	51.6%	54.1%	54.4%	49.7%	42.1%	32.5%	48.1%		
The SMEs consult consumers more, because they communicate easier with them	Disagree	10.8%	16.0%	15.0%	18.5%	12.4%	15.7%	15.0%		
	Neither agree nor disagree	43.5%	40.7%	42.9%	48.7%	49.5%	54.8%	46.5%	24.687	0.006*
	Agree	45.7%	43.3%	42.1%	32.8%	38.2%	29.4%	38.5%		
My purchasing decisions are based on the opinions of other consumers	Disagree	18.8%	15.6%	22.1%	25.6%	32.4%	47.2%	26.4%		
	Neither agree nor disagree	38.7%	33.3%	27.6%	35.7%	32.8%	32.0%	32.9%	93.887	0.000**
	Agree	42.5%	51.1%	50.3%	38.6%	34.7%	20.8%	40.6%		

*. Significance level of 0.05.

**. Significance level of 0.01.

Source: Own work

With respect to the variable of gender, in general the process of co-creation is significantly more associated with the profile of a female user. Thus, as can be seen in the next table, women are more favourably disposed to: the process of co-creation in general, and specifically to the idea of posting recommendations and participating more actively in the co-creation processes with brands; interacting more with companies; and taking the eWOM more into account when making a purchasing decision (Table 6).

Table 6. Attitudes to co-creation by gender

Attitudes to co-creation		Gender			Chi-squared	Significance
		Men %	Women %	Total %		
I am prepared to recommend and share my purchasing experience with my friends through ratings/reviews	Disagree	16.5%	16.0%	16.2%		
	Neither agree nor disagree	34.5%	28.9%	31.7%	6.534	0.038*
	Agree	49.0%	55.1%	52.1%		
I am prepared to recommend to my friends a product of a brand that is worth buying	Disagree	12.6%	8.2%	10.4%		
	Neither agree nor disagree	25.6%	21.2%	23.4%	14.750	0.001**
	Agree	61.8%	70.6%	66.2%		

	Disagree	27.9%	20.6%	24.2%		
4. I am prepared to make suggestions on my social media when my friends need my advice on the purchase of a product	Neither agree nor disagree	32.3%	34.6%	33.5%	11.246	0.004*
	Agree	39.8%	44.8%	42.3%		
	Disagree	20.7%	16.9%	18.8%		
When it comes to buying a brand, I bear in mind the purchasing experience my friends have shared on social media	Neither agree nor disagree	32.5%	29.6%	31.0%	7.465	0.024*
	Agree	46.7%	53.5%	50.2%		
	Disagree	31.2%	27.3%	29.3%		
I like to interact with my favourite brands and give them my opinion on new items that appear on the market	Neither agree nor disagree	43.6%	41.8%	42.7%	6.506	0.039*
	Agree	25.2%	30.9%	28.1%		
	Disagree	56.6%	50.3%	53.4%		
I have participated in the creation of some new product content	Neither agree nor disagree	27.6%	29.7%	28.7%	7.228	0.027*
	Agree	15.8%	20.1%	17.9%		
	Disagree	47.1%	39.5%	43.3%		
I have participated in the creation of specific content for a brand	Neither agree nor disagree	30.5%	33.2%	31.9%	9.918	0.007*
	Agree	22.3%	27.3%	24.9%		
	Disagree	22.3%	18.2%	20.2%		
I have discovered new brands thanks to the interaction of other users	Neither agree nor disagree	33.2%	30.1%	31.6%	8.400	0.015*
	Agree	44.5%	51.7%	48.1%		
	Disagree	15.5%	14.5%	15%		
Small companies consult consumers more	Neither agree nor disagree	49.5%	43.6%	46.5%	7.688	0.021*
	Agree	35.1%	41.9%	38.5%		
	Disagree	29.3%	23.6%	26.4%		
My purchasing decisions are based on the opinions of other consumers	Neither agree nor disagree	34.0%	31.9%	32.9%	11.123	0.004*
	Agree	36.7%	44.5%	40.6%		

*. Significance level of 0.05.

**. Significance level of 0.01.

Source: Own work

On studying the variable linked to income levels, it can be seen that there are significant differences in the different attitudes of co-creation among users. Thus, the most favourable predisposition to eWOM and the interaction between the company and customer is significantly more associated with the high income-level segment. However, the least favourable predisposition to the co-creation process and eWOM, when it implies a greater participation and effort on the part of the individual, is significantly more associated with persons with high incomes (Table 7).

Table 7. Attitudes to co-creation and income levels

Attitudes to co-creation through eWOM		Income level					Chi-squared	Significance
		High %	Average %	Low %	D/K %	Total %		
I am prepared to recommend and share my purchasing experience with my friends through ratings/reviews	Disagree	16.7%	14.1%	14.1%	19.7%	16.2%	16.983	0.009*
	Neither agree nor disagree	27.9%	35.1%	31.6%	38.5%	31.6%		
	Agree	55.3%	50.8%	54.3%	41.8%	52.2%		
I am prepared to recommend to my friends a product of a brand that is worth buying	Disagree	9.3%	8.7%	12.4%	14.6%	10.4%	26.029	0.000**
	Neither agree nor disagree	19.1%	27.6%	22.6%	30.0%	23.1%		
	Agree	71.6%	63.7%	65.0%	55.4%	66.5%		
I like that the brand's website listens to my comments and answers me when necessary	Disagree	11.2%	8.7%	12.4%	16.0%	11.5%	17.451	0.008*
	Neither agree nor disagree	26.4%	33.9%	33.3%	33.3%	30.1%		
	Agree	62.4%	57.4%	54.3%	50.7%	58.3%		
When a product does not satisfy me, I tend to post a critical review of my experience with the brand	Disagree	25.6%	23.1%	26.5%	23.0%	24.8%	30.626	0.000**
	Neither agree nor disagree	27.5%	39.3%	39.7%	41.8%	34.1%		
	Agree	46.9%	37.5%	33.8%	35.2%	41.1%		
I have participated in the creation of some new product content	Disagree	56.3%	54.1%	50.9%	47.9%	53.8%	14.977	0.020*
	Neither agree nor disagree	25.0%	28.5%	29.5%	38.0%	28.3%		
	Agree	18.7%	17.4%	19.7%	14.1%	17.9%		
I have participated in the creation of specific content for a brand	Disagree	46.9%	39.0%	40.2%	42.7%	43.5%	25.371	0.000**
	Neither agree nor disagree	26.7%	35.1%	32.9%	41.3%	31.6%		
	Agree	26.4%	25.8%	26.9%	16.0%	24.9%		
I buy more products from brands that take into account my comments and suggestions	Disagree	22.8%	16.2%	19.2%	18.8%	20.2%	14.410	0.025*
	Neither agree nor disagree	40.9%	48.6%	47.29%	52.1%	45.3%		
	Agree	36.2%	35.1%	32.9%	29.1%	34.5%		

*. Significance level of 0.05.

**. Significance level of 0.01.

Source: Own work

The results of the education variable generate significant differences in only three of the attitudes to co-creation. In all cases, the greater the individual's level of studies, the more positive the attitude towards recommending a product; and comments posted on the Internet exercise a greater influence on the likelihood of them buying a specific brand (Table 8).

Table 8. Attitudes to co-creation and educational level

Attitude to co-creation		Basic %	Average %	High %	Very high %	Total %	Chi-squared	Significance
		Educational level						
I am prepared to recommend to my friends a product of a brand that is worth buying	Disagree	17.1%	10.6%	9.0%	8.7%	10.4%	28.661	0.000**
	Neither agree nor disagree	32.9%	24.6%	20.1%	20.6%	23.4%		
	Agree	50.0%	64.7%	70.9%	70.7%	66.2%		
When it comes to buying a brand, I bear in mind the purchasing experience my friends have shared on social media	Disagree	21.2%	20.4%	18.4%	16.6%	18.8%	18.153	0.006*
	Neither agree nor disagree	38.8%	31.7%	33.2%	26.9%	31.0%		
	Agree	40.0%	47.9%	48.4%	56.5%	50.2%		
My purchasing decisions are based on the opinions of other consumers	Disagree	30.6%	27.0%	25.0%	25.2%	26.4%	19.736	0.003*
	Neither agree nor disagree	36.5%	36.5%	34.0%	27.6%	32.9%		
	Agree	32.9%	36.5%	41.0%	47.1%	40.6%		

*. Significance level of 0.05.

**. Significance level of 0.01.

Source: Own work

After the descriptive analysis, we identified (through a binary logistic regression analysis) various explanatory models related to the probability of participating in a co-creation process through eWOM. To create the model, sociodemographic (gender, age and educational level) and economic characteristics (income level) of the individual were considered as possible explanatory variables.

With respect to the Logit model proposed (see Table 9), the probability of greater participation and involvement with a co-creation process (creating a specific content for a brand) increases, as follows (in order of importance): as the age of the person decreases, the income level increases and if the person is a woman.

Table 9. Co-creation model of brand content. Variables in the equation

	B	Standard error	Wald	Gl	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender	.302	.136	4.932	1	.026	1.353
Age in bands	-.150	.045	11.238	1	.001	.861
Income level	-.006	.002	6.083	1	.014	.995
Constant	-.265	.328	.655	1	.419	.767

Source: Own work

In addition, when what is being studied is the willingness to post a recommendation or review of a product/brand through eWOM, the probability increases when the person is a woman, the educational level is higher and the income level is high (table 10)

Table 10. Model of positive recommendation to a brand. Variables in the equation

	B	Standard error	Wald	Gl	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender	.405	.112	12.969	1	.000	1.499
Educational level	.166	.041	16.665	1	.000	1.180
Income level	-.006	.002	14.786	1	.000	.994
Constant	-.615	.253	5.915	1	.015	.541

Source: Own work

Lastly, the probability that a comment shared on the Internet can influence an individual's purchasing decision increases as follows (in order of importance): the younger the person, the higher the person's educational level, and the higher the income level (see table 11).

Table 11. Co-creation model related to the purchasing intention. Variables in the equation

	B	Standard error	Wald	gl	Sig.	Exp(B)
Age in bands	-.144	.034	17.526	1	.000	.866
Educational level	.117	.038	9.289	1	.002	1.124
Income level	-.004	.002	7.801	1	.005	.996
Constant	.165	.271	.371	1	.542	1.180

Source: Own work

Before moving on to the discussion and conclusions, a summary table with the main results of the study is presented (see table 12).

Table 12. Cocreator profile

	Genre	Age	Education Level	Income Level
Profile of the user-creator of content for a brand	Woman	Young	---	High
User profile - brand recommender	---	---	Higher Education	High
User profile influenced by eWOM in the purchasing decision	Woman	Young	Higher Education	High

Source: Own work

4. Discussion

This research yields some surprising data, which have been explained on the basis of the results. However, it remains to be answered which model best responds to the co-creation process.

As explained in the introduction, the concept of co-creation proposed in 2018 by Ramaswamy and Ozcan grants equal importance to artefacts, persons, processes and interfaces. However, we propose a modification to the model, so that persons occupy the focus of the co-creation dynamic, given that it is customers, users and consumers who are the leading players in the activity of value creation for the brand (Chart 2).

Chart 2: Redefinition of the co-creation process
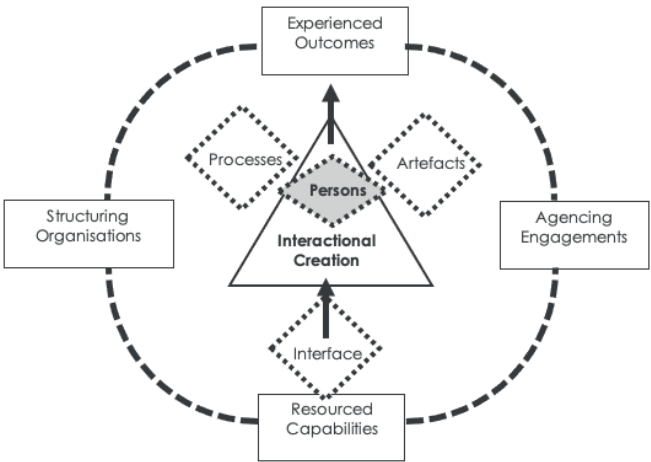
Source: Adapted from Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2018)

It is through the eWOM created in social media, forums, chats or hashtags where dialogue is created and the brand content is created with a purpose; and where customers acquire a leading role and share their discourse with other users in an environment in which they feel more comfortable, far from the official brand profiles. This research therefore calls for greater attention to be paid to the dispositions and behaviours of users, in order to discover to what extent they see themselves to be affected in their co-creation activity.

5. Conclusions

This work was carried out with a representative sample of the Spanish population using social media. It offers a profile of the consumers who interact dynamically with the brands in digital environments. Currently the Spanish population has a very positive attitude to eWOM. People engage in this behaviour through recommendations, comments and reviews, on both the Internet and social media. Although it is true that a large number of Spanish people are highly predisposed to co-creation, when this process requires greater participation and effort on the part of users, the percentage who finally become involved declines significantly. As Li and Bernoff, 2008 note, only a small proportion of true "creators" become real participants with an active role in content co-creation, in line with the brands' marketing and communication strategy.

The results of this study confirm the influence of the recommendations on the purchasing decision of consumers, as noted previously in other studies (Tseng et al. 2013; Tajvidi et al., 2018)

With respect to the profile of social media users, most like to engage in co-creation, there are significant differences based on sociodemographic and economic variables. The age of individuals is the personal variable that contributes most differences in the co-creation process, followed by gender, income level and educational level.

In general, as the age of the individual increases, the probability of participating in processes of co-creation and recommendation of a product or brand decreases. Similarly, the greater the purchasing power, the greater the likelihood of sharing experiences and comments on the Internet. Finally, women are the segment of the population who are most predisposed to co-creation.

Moreover, the co-creator's profile has been identified according to the level of involvement and participation, thanks to the application of regression models. In this way, when the process of creation is more complex and requires a greater commitment to brand content creation, the probability that an individual may participate increases if the individual is a woman, young and with above average income.

When the level of participation is linked to eWOM by recommendations and positive comments about a brand, the probability increases when the user's profile is a woman, with a university-level education and an above-average income level.

Finally, the probability of a comment/review influencing the purchasing decision of the user increases the younger the person is and the greater their educational level and income.

For all of these reasons, and based on the results of the study, the authors understand that co-creation can be defined as a dynamic process of interaction that establishes an open and ongoing dialogue with consumers that is capable of generating improvements and change in business activity through interactive exchange dynamics. That is why we propose as a final recommendation that brands should promote greater co-creation activity, involving segments identified as the most likely and generating interaction and two-way activity. It is worth recalling that the recommendations and experiential stories of consumers have a beneficial effect on purchasing decisions and on the creation of brand value.

6. Specific contributions of each author

Contributions	Author
Research design	Sonia Carcelén García and Paloma Díaz Sologa
Documentary search	Paloma Díaz Sologa
Data collection	Sonia Carcelén García and Paloma Díaz Sologa
Critical data analysis and interpretation	Sonia Carcelén García

7. Acknowledgement

8. References

[1] Balaji, M. S.; Khong, K. W. & Chong, A. Y. L. (2016). Determinants of negative word-of-mouth communication using social networking sites. *Information & Management*, 53, 528-540. [2] Black, I. & Veloutsou, C. (2017). Working consumers: Co-creation of brand identity, consumer identity and brand community identity. *Journal of Business Research,* 70, 416–429. https://doi.org/gfc7td

[2] Calder, B. J.; Malthouse, E. C. & Schaedel, U. (2009). An Experimental Study of the Relationship Between Online Engagement and Advertising Effectiveness. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 23(4), 321–31. https://doi.org/b7kgj5

[3] Cossío-Silva, F. J.; Revilla, M. A.; Vega, M. & Palacios, B. (2016). Value co-creation and customer loyalty. *Journal of Business Research,* 69(5), 1621-1625.

[4] Erdem, T.; Keller, K. L.; Kuksov, D. & Pieters, R. (2016). Understanding branding in a digitally empowered world. *International Journal of Research in Marketing,* 33(1), 3-10. [6] Essamri, A; Mckechnie, S. & Winklhofer, H. (2019). Co-creating corporate brand identity with online brand communities: A managerial perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 96, 366-375. https://doi.org/csq7

[5] France, C.; Grace, D.; Merrilees, B. & Miller, D. (2018). Customer brand co-creation behavior: conceptualization and empirical validation. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning,* 36(3), 334-348. https://doi.org/gxss

[6] Hajli, N.; Shanmugam, M.; Papagiannidis, S.; Zahay, D. & Richard, M. O. (2017). Branding co-creation with members of online brand communities. *Journal of Business Research*, 70, 136-144. https://doi.org/gfw6mt

[7] Hatch, M. J. & Schultz, M. (2010). Toward a theory of brand co-creation with implications for brand governance. *Journal of Brand Management*, 17(8), 590-604. https://doi.org/dggmw3

[8] Hsieh, S. H. & Chang, A. (2016). The Psychological Mechanism of Brand Co-creation Engagement. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 33, 13-26. https://doi.org/gfc7tn

[9] Hsu, L. & Lawrence, B. (2016). The role of social media and brand equity during a product recall crisis: A shareholder value perspective. *International Journal of Research in Marketing,* 33(1) 59–77. https://doi.org/f8mmwd

[10] Iglesias, O.; Markovic, S.; Bagherzadeh, M. & Singh, J. J. (2020). Co-creation: A Key Link Between Corporate Social Responsibility, Customer Trust, and Customer Loyalty. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 163, 151–166. https://doi.org/ghjt5v

[11] Li, C. & Bernoff, J. (2008). *Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.

[12] Lin, S.; Yang, S.; Ma, M. & Huang, J. (2018). Value co-creation on social media: Examining the relationship between brand engagement and display advertising effectiveness for Chinese hotels, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management,* 30(4), 2153-2174. https://doi.org/gdhkh6

[13] Merz, M.A.; Zarantonello, L. & Grappi, S. (2018). How valuable are your customers in the brand value co-creation process? The development of a Customer Co-Creation Value (CCCV) scale. *Journal of Business Research*, 82, 79-89. https://doi.org/gc8swr

[14] Muñoz-Domínguez, G. y Díaz-Soloaga, P. (2020). Co-creación, contenido y comunidad: nuevas bases del *engagement* digital en marcas de cosmética. En *Comunicación y diversidad. Selección de comunicaciones del VII Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Española de Investigación de la Comunicación (AE-IC)* (pp. 319-330). https://doi.org/gxs5

[15] Pagani, M. & Malacarne, G. (2017). Experiential Engagement and Active vs. Passive Behavior in Mobile Location-based Social Networks: The Moderanting Role of Privacy. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 37,133-148. https://doi.org/ghzdm7

[16] Poturak, M. & Softic, S. (2019). Influence of Social Media Content on Consumer Purchache Intention: Mediation Effect on Brand Equity. *Eurasian Journal of Business and Economics, 12*(23), 17-43.

[19] Prahalad, C. K. & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation, *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 18*(3), 5-14. https://doi.org/cs5rvd

[17] Ramaswamy, V. & Ozcan, K. (2018). What is co-creation? An interactional creation framework and its implications for value creation, *Journal of Business Research*, 84, 196-205. https://doi.org/dtbc

[18] Relling, M.; Schnittka, O.; Sattler, H. & Johnen, M. (2016). Each can help or hurt: Negative and positive word of mouth in social network brand communities. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *33*(1), 42-58. https://doi.org/f8m2b6

[19] Sarkar, S. & Banerjee, S. (2019). Brand co-creation through triadic stakeholder participation: A conceptual framework based on literature review, *European Business Review, 3*(5), 585-609. https://doi.org/gxs6

[20] Seiler, S.; Yao, S. & Wang, W. (2017). Does Online Word of Mouth Increase Demand? (And How?) Evidence from a Natural Experiment. *Marketing Science*, *36*(6), 838-861. https://doi.org/gh6x6f

[21] Schmeltz, L. & Kjeldsen, A. K. (2019). Co-creating polyphony or cacophony? A case study of a public organization's brand co-creation process and the challenge of orchestrating multiple internal voices. *Journal of Brand Management*, 26, 304–316. https://doi.org/gmk9vb

[22] Tajvidi, M.; Richard, M. O.; Wang, Y. & Hajli, N. (2018). Brand Co-creation through social commerce information sharing: the role of social media. *Journal of Business Research*, 121, 476-486. https://doi.org/gkb6wq

[23] Tjandra, N. C.; Rihova, I.; Snell, S.; Den Hertog, C. S. & Theodoraki, E. (2020). Mega-events brand meaning co-creation: the Olympic case. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 30*(1) 58-73. https://doi.org/gh2htq

[24] Tseng, C. H.; Kuo, H. C. & Chen, J. M. (2013). The relationship among advertisement, electronic word of mouth, and purchase intention of virtual community members. In *Proceedings for the Northeast Region Decision Sciences Institute 2013 Annual Meeting* (pp. 129-148).

[25] Vargo S. L & Lusch R. F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of Marketing, 68*(1), 1-17. https://doi.org/bv2z2x

[26] Zhao, Y.; Chen, Y.; Zhou, R. & Ci, Y. (2019). Factors influencing customers willingness to participate in virtual brand community's value co-creation: The moderating effect of customer involvement. *Online Information Review, 43*(3), 440-461. https://doi.org/gxs8

[27] Zhang, H.; Lu., Y.; Wang, B. & Wu, S. (2015). The impacts of technological environments and co-creation experiences on customer participation, *Information & Management*, *52*(4), 468-482. https://doi.org/bcpp

Dr. María HERNÁNDEZ-HERRERA
Universidad Francisco de Vitoria. Spain. maria.hernandez@ufv.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2784-6789

Dr. Francisco-José GIL-RUIZ
Universidad Francisco de Vitoria. Spain. franciscojose.gil@ufv.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4169-1165

Dr. María-Luisa GARCÍA-GUARDIA
Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Spain. mluisagarcia@ccinf.ucm.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9818-6602

Dr. Raquel AYESTARÁN-CRESPO
Universidad Francisco de Vitoria. Spain. r.ayestaran@ufv.es. http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1066-3257

Fashion film as a brand action. The case of Europa II in Vogue

El fashion film como acción de la marca. El caso de Europa II en Vogue

Abstract

This paper studies the fashion film as a marketing tool through the study of the short film Europa II by Vogue. Initially, the research delves into fashion, the Vogue brand, the nature of fashion film as an advertising format, and the importance of brand partnerships. Next, an exploratory study seeks to identify the associations of the Vogue brand present in Europa II. The methodology starts from a semiotic analysis focused on extracting those associations (references and cultural values latent in it) from the narrative proposal of Europa II, thereby identifying the meanings present in its narrative, those that ultimately speak about the brand, about how it wants to be perceived. Later, the resulting associations were contrasted through an interview with seven experts in the field of marketing and/ or communication. It was concluded that Europa II assists Vogue to rejuvenate its target and, therefore, connect with new audiences. Hence, brand associations provide a turning point in terms of the persuasive power of Europa II, connecting narrative analysis with the meaning of the brand.

Resumen

Este trabajo estudia el fashion film como herramienta de marketing a través del estudio del cortometraje Europa II de Vogue. En primer lugar, la investigación profundiza en la moda, en la marca Vogue, en la propia naturaleza del fashion film como formato publicitario, y en la importancia de las asociaciones de marca. En segundo lugar, se lleva a cabo un estudio exploratorio que identifica las asociaciones de la marca Vogue presentes en Europa II. La metodología empleada parte de un análisis semiótico centrado en extraer aquellas asociaciones (referencias y valores culturales latentes en él) desde la propuesta narrativa de Europa II, identificando así los significados presentes en su narrativa, aquellos que en definitiva hablan de la marca, de cómo quiere ser percibida. Hecho esto, se contrastaron las asociaciones resultantes mediante una entrevista a siete expertos en el ámbito del marketing y/o la comunicación. De entre las principales conclusiones, cabe destacar que Europa II sirve a Vogue para rejuvenecer su target y, por ende, conectar con nuevos públicos. Las asociaciones de marca aportan de este modo un punto de inflexión en cuanto al poder persuasivo de Europa II, conectando el análisis narrativo con el significado de la marca.

Keywords

Fashion films; Branded content; Persuasive communication; Brand associations; Brand strategy; fashion

Palabras clave

Fashion films; Branded content; Comunicación persuasiva; Asociaciones de marca; Estrategia de marca; Moda

1. Introduction

Vogue magazine was founded in 1892, celebrating the feminine ideal of the era: "the domestic angel" (Velasco, 2019: 166), although it was aimed at an audience of younger, more modern and wealthy women. Since then there have been any number of attempts to modernise the Vogue brand, both by harnessing new technologies (in 2010 Vogue relaunched its website and in 2012 created an application), and by positioning the brand within feminism.

In 2004, Vogue dedicated its cover to the women ministers of the new PSOE Government of Spain and in 2015, to the Italian *influencer* Chiara Ferragni. The former received intense criticism on its focus on the women's interest in fashion rather than their political skills (Velasco, 2019). Vogue's representation of women, and the feminine, still seemed remote from feminist ideals, portraying women as domestic, wives and employees: "the issue promoted the same established roles for men and women in society since time immemorial" (Luque & Pérez, 2018: 147). The latter cover was aimed at expanding the readership of the magazine, seeing the followers of Chiara Ferragni as possible consumers (Velasco, 2019).

Nevertheless, Vogue is widely regarded as routine and old-fashioned, failing to establish its position on the internet. Sales have fallen since the 1980's despite efforts to modernise the brand, reflecting the lack of effective strategies to surprise, connect and/or reconnect with consumers (Ramos-Serrano & Pineda, 2009). According to Condé Nast (2018), Vogue readers have an average age of 37 and their sources of inspiration and purchasing decisions are magazines or fashion websites followed by print media. These women, although they take the opinions of others into consideration, prefer to make their decisions directly, without professional advice[1].

Influencers have become a key element in brand strategies to connect with consumers, with good results (García, 2017). If classic or traditional advertising (intrusive) sought to reach the masses through repetitive messaging, where the product is the central feature and focus. Consumers are now less willing to be guided by brands (Godin & Bravo, 2006), hence the need for experiential marketing focussing not on the product itself but rather calling attention to the brand (Del Pino & Castelló, 2015), provoking emotions that positively connect with the brand and incorporating it into a lifestyle (Costa-Sánchez, 2014).

But it is not only through *influencers* that the consumer finds affinity with brands; cinematic narratives represent a different way for consumers to know and connect with brands. This type of communication incorporates the following elements: the prosumer (Toffler, 1980), a receptor who actively participates in the communication (Ahluwalia & Miller, 2014; Costa-Sánchez, 2014; Martin, 2015) and dissemination of brand experiences with which they have an emotional connection (De Assis, 2014; Gambetti & Graffigna, 2011); the use of new narrative techniques using formats that allow a combination of different artistic idioms (such as cinema, music and fashion) and offer a new type of entertainment (Arbaiza, 2017); and an intent beyond mere advertising, aiming to achieve an emotional connection between the receptor and brand values (Gobé, 2010). This paper will explore these types of actions, specifically *fashion films* and, in particular, *Europa II*, the *fashion film* produced by Vogue to expand their brand reach and attract new consumers. We will analyse the importance and impact of the brand associations within these narratives to reach their audience.

We will also note how, far from democratising brand access, *fashion films* have the opposite effect: the clearest example being known as the "Burberry effect", with the creation of the Burberry Prorsum line at a higher price range, positioning Burberry on par with other luxury brands (Moore & Birtwistle, 2004).

2. Frame of reference

2.1. *Advertainment* and branded content

Advertainment or *branded content*[2] is essentially a new form of communication between advertiser and audience, using formats and tools which are attractive to consumers and which reflect the demands of contemporary society (Imbert, 2003). As opposed to *product placement*, where a product is inserted into the content, here the product itself becomes the content (Arbaiza & Huertas, 2018) as a new way to engage with users and share experiences (Del Pino, Castelló & Ramos-Soler, 2013).

> Branded Content is a communication asset produced or co-produced by a brand offering entertainment, information and/or utility, transmitting the brand values and engaging with a target audience who voluntarily dedicate their attention (BCMA Spain, s.f.).

The most salient characteristics of *branded content* are (Del Pino & Castelló, 2015; Arbaiza & Huertas, 2018): 1) the use of *Big data* to identify the tastes, interests, preferences and lifestyles of users; 2) *storytelling*, a coherent narrative expressing the values and emotions the brand wishes to convey; 3) virality: *branded content* adapts to different mediums but largely seeks to use non-conventional channels such as social media; and 4) transmedia storytelling, where the consumer becomes the prosumer,

actively participating in the generation of content and promoting it through their engagement. There are generally three formats: fiction, videogames and virtual, networked entertainment spaces (Ramos, 2006).

This has given rise to new genres, new tools and new talent. *Fashion films* are a prime example of this: online shorts containing or dealing with aspects of fashion that can be produced by both professionals and neophytes alike (Skjulstad & Morrison, 2016) and whose format defies and transcends categories, genres and contexts of cultural production. Authors speak of genre ecologies, a series of characteristics which define the digital era, such as the reuse and recombination of contents, styles and forms. This is closely associated with the *fashion film*, given that these are free from the strictures of formal genres and, as products of the internet era and social media, have an ecologically complex and communicatively fluid function. Thus, the *fashion film* offers greater creative freedom, able to appropriate and draw from other art forms while being unconstrained by the formal expectations of the audience. These films serve to transmit the brand identity and values, generate the emotional engagement of consumers who can viralise the content (Guerrero & González-Díez, 2019).

Fashion lies within the liminal space between art, industry and culture, playing an ever more important and recreative role in cultural production (Taylor, 2005). With digital technologies, the synergies between fashion brands and the arts have become increasingly evident, with fashion brands participating in architectural projects, collaborating with museums or incursions into cinema (Uhlirova, 2013). The result is a hybridisation, the focus of this case study.

2.2. Hybridisation between cinema and fashion: a historic relationship

The relationship between cinema and fashion, modern industries *par excellence*, dates back to the origins of both, with innumerable direct contacts and interactions (Uhlirova, 2013). A pioneer of this relationship was Georges Méliès, who between 1898 and 1900 produced ads for Mystère corsets and Delion hats (Bessy & Duca, 1961). *Fifty years of Paris fashions, 1859-1909* (1910), first screened in London, is considered the first fashion film (Leese, 1991), and Paul Poiret was the first couturier to embrace the cinema in 1911 with a complete film history of his designs (Evans, 2001).

The medium of cinema offers a showcase for fashion apparel, the true protagonists of the films unaccompanied by narrative or plot; the mere display of the clothing was an incentive to buy (Uhlirova, 2010). This period also saw the appearance of the newsreel or '*cinemagazine*', which quickly became the principal format for the dissemination of the latest fashions, including advice on how to dress aimed at sophisticated and fashion conscious middle-class women (Uhlirova, 2013). From the 1930's to the 1950's, the Golden Age of Hollywood, *cinemagazines* became renowned for their use of actresses as fashion models (Díaz & García, 2016), although by the 1950's fashion photographers themselves began to take serious interest in cinema (Lawford, 1985), producing a number of experimental films (Mijovic, 2013).

A proliferation of television programs about fashion would follow, as well as the appearance of boutique fashion outlets aiming to create a brand universe in which clients identity with the brand with all five senses (Wickstrom, 2006). Fashion firms aim to transmit a lifestyle and values around their brands, spurring online sales and internationalisation (Manlow & Nobbs, 2013). In this effort, spaces are more important than the products: aiming to create a place of encounter with art using atmospheric videos, music, etc (Díaz & García, 2016); videos are an essential aspect of the visual experience of live fashion shows. This was the origin of multisensorial marketing, where designers experimented with the emotions produced by the interaction of clothing and the body depicted through video. The new century would see the incorporation of digital technologies into catwalk shows, becoming truly multimedia spectacles (Uhlirova, 2013).

It may be said that the rise of sensorial experiences and new technologies marked the birth of *fashion films*; luxury brands began to invest heavily to produce films with famous directors and disseminate them *online*. Chanel, Dior and Louis Vuitton are considered pioneers in enlisting leading directors for their films and they have since been joined by other firms such as Prada, Proenza Schouler or H&M; however, luxury firms have primarily used *fashion films* to transmit the brand experience to wider audiences, regardless of social class (Díaz & García, 2016). For the luxury goods industry, *fashion films* offer an opportunity to develop the abstract aspects of their identity, communicated through experiences and emotions (Guerrero & González-Díez, 2019).

In 2009, the first *International Fashion Film Festival* was held in La Jolla, San Diego (USA) to recognise the most creative products and directors in the world of fashion. In the 9th edition of the festival, *Europa II* was proclaimed the best film and Imanol Ruiz de Lara, best director. Since then other major cities have joined the initiative, with important festivals now being held in Madrid and Barcelona, Spain.

2.3. *Fashion film*: advertising narratives and aesthetic pleasure

The *fashion film* can be considered as a uniquely digital genre, an internet genre, originating at the start of the 21st century (Uhlirova, 2013; Skjulstad & Morrison, 2016) with very specific aims in terms of social action (Miller, 1984):

> Short audio-visual productions at the service of a brand, characterised by a communicative style where beauty and a carefully crafted aesthetic, inherited from fashion photography, predominate in the image and messaging of the product and/or brand itself (Del Pino & Castelló, 2015: 14).

The *fashion film* shares with *branded content* the use of *storytelling* and the quest for virality, but it also has certain unique characteristics (Mijovic, 2013; Caerols & De la Horra, 2015; Del Pino & Castelló, 2015; Arbaiza & Huertas, 2018; Kam, Robledo-Dioses & Atarama-Rojas, 2019): 1)a carefully crafted visual aesthetic; 2) shorts, generally between one and five minutes in length, longer than traditional advertising spots; 3) a fast-paced narrative style; 4) generating emotions through a cinematic experience; 5) serialisation; and 6) diverse themes and limited dialogue.

Furthermore, *fashion films* can be separated into three types (Mijovic, 2013): 1) non-narrative, 2) conventional narratives, and 3) organic narratives; these types depend on the form of storytelling and the manner in which products or brands are incorporated into the film; in the majority of *fashion films*, products or brands are relegated to a second plane. The aim is to establish an emotional connection with the consumer for which the product itself is not necessary and may not even appear.

An increasing number of firms are turning to *fashion films* as a way to experiment and to create a bond with clients most commonly through narration, serialisation and aesthetic pleasure (Díaz & García, 2016).

1. Narration refers to the story itself, which is fundamental to seduce the viewer and make them a participant in the communication. Narration is an essential aspect of the construction of human identity (Ricoeur, 1996).

2. Serialisation helps generate expectation in the consumer, awaiting the release of the next instalment, enticing the audience to remain connected with the brand.

3. Aesthetic pleasure, as mentioned above, is achieved by enlisting leading cinema directors and fashion photographers to produce the films as they have much greater knowledge of the medium and techniques to generate empathy, seduce and immerse the spectator in the narrative universe of the film.

The objective is to create content with emotional, sensorial and cognitive experiences that construct a brand image and build consumer loyalty driving emotional and irrational purchasing decisions (Atwal & Williams, 2009).

These films also serve to bring high fashion into the world of art, not only through synergies with cinema but also through the conception of fashion as an art form in itself, a notion which has often been contested (Miller, 2007). The *fashion film* can give a more intense aesthetic experience of textures, movement and creative concepts than a classic catwalk show, attracting the consumer through an emotional experience with the brand (Michaud, 2015).

2.4. *Fashion films, brand associations*

Fashion films can help position brands within the mind of consumers, connecting to their desires, tastes and emotion and moulding their perceptions, since, ultimately, the brand exists in the manner and to the extent it is perceived by the consumer (Fournier, 1998).

Currently, consumption is intense, ephemeral (products quickly sell out or become outmoded) and imposed (consumption is a rule) (Bauman, 2007). Within this context, the consumer needs to trust in a brand, perceive its humanity (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan, 2018); hence the importance of brand associations which, according to Llopis (2015), are feelings, convictions and knowledge consumer gain through their own experiences (use of the product) and those of others (word-of-mouth) of a brand. For Keller (2008), brand associations are information nodes between the brand and consumers, differentiating the brand and forming basic associations (for example, the attributes and benefits the product has to offer), secondary connections (links through other entities), and even unique conceptions.

Associations are woven in the mind of consumers through brand awareness and brand image; brands impact consumers in two ways: recognition, where the consumer can identify the brand in any context; and memory, referring to the relating of the brand with certain categories of previously known products (Keller, 1993; 2008). Recognition is the primary aspect, followed by memory, leading to what is referred to as *top of mind awareness* (Aaker, 1991). Brand image refers to how the consumer perceives the brand based

on the stimuli provided, which will stimulate, or not, their preferences, translating into *brand equity* (Keller, 1993; Llopis, 2015). Brand associations depend on a number of classifications[3], especially as intermediaries between firms and clients. Ultimately, these associations are stamped into the mind of consumers through direct or indirect experiences, thus constructing the image and awareness of the brand.

Brands must manage their communications strategies consistently and ensure an emotional payoff to clients in order for their purchases to have meaning (Aaker & Álvarez, 2014). The digital environment is the ideal field to build brand awareness which, according to Rubalcava, Sánchez-Tovar and Sánchez-Limón (2019), can be further energised by social media when brands transmit quality content which users speak of and share (word-of-mouth). Digital media offer the opportunity to viralise content, surprising consumers and creating new associations that drive consumption; Antolín and Clemente (2017) explain how a number of brands have used YouTube to showcase their products. A specific example they note is the *Epic Split* video with Jean Claude Van Damme by Volvo, with striking images that suggest positive associations in the mind of viewers.

Brands must transmit meaning using long-term communication strategies that are both consistent and energetic, incorporating memorable actions (Aaker & Álvarez, 2014), creating, reinforcing and revitalising brand associations (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2008), boosting recognition and memory through these meanings, and thus incentivising consumption. This, as expressed by Kotler and Keller (2012: 482) is "the foundation of brand equity".

Latif, Islam and Noor (2014) note that awareness can be furthered by various means, including advertising spots; *fashion films* may fall into a separate category; they offer a narrative of the brand, associating it with the values that create *top of mind awareness*. Buffo (2017) explains how brands that use this format '*narrate'* their essence, creating structured fictions that can be distinguished on three levels: tell a story, express a personality (a celebrity performing actions that portray the brand), and create an atmosphere, capturing the spirit and essence of the brand. These aspects can be linked to *branding*, and the aim is clear: narrations ascribe meaning to the brand; these become associations in the minds of consumers for them to know and remember the brand. The cinematographic narration of high fashion thus becomes a means of *engagement*, revitalising intentions, generating experiences, expectations and satisfactions.

3. Objectives and methodology

The aim of this study is to analyse the *fashion film Europa II* by Vogue Spain, and its strategy to position the brand in the mind of consumers by expressing certain values. The study has the following specific objectives: O1, explore the phenomenon of *fashion films*, their relation to other advertising formats and the implications for the brand; O2, extract the meanings or references embedding in the *fashion film Europa II*, identifying the associations suggested by the brand as part of a strategy to reach a target audience; O3, analyse these associations with experts in the field of marketing and/or communication. This will help illustrate the strategy of the brand with *Europa II*, its objectives, the values ascribed to specific brand associations and, possibly, the results of the initiative.

We propose the hypothesis that *Europa II* represents a strategy by Vogue to expand its brand associations to reach a new and different consumer profile. We will evaluate whether Vogue was effective in enhancing its brand image, raising brand awareness and the role of the brand associations within the *fashion film*.

The methodology used to achieve these objectives is as follows:

1) A bibliographical overview of *fashion films* and their place within the field of advertising and marketing.

2) Semiotic analysis of the narrative of *Europa II*. The film was divided into four segments as basic units of content (Cassetti & DiChio, 2007). Each segment was analysed as follows: 1) a description of the content (Serrano, 2001), outlining the action taking place during the segment, and 2) a critical interpretation of each segment, extracting allusions, references and cultural values (meanings) embedded in the segment, particularly with regards to notions of feminism, femininity and *mainstream* culture. These imbue the narrative with meanings, motivations and values (Pérez, 2014), that is, brand associations communicated to the consumer. By distilling the meaning from these associations we can have a conceptual understanding of the brand image expressed by *Europa II*. Following the classification by Aaker (1996: 84-85), the extracted associations will be symbolic, having a specific importance and weight in terms of the cultural meaning they bring to the brand[4]. Each reference will be evaluated and articulated in relation to specific cultural aspects in order to understand what Vogue wishes to say with *Europa II*.

3) Interviews with experts in the field of communication and/or marketing. Using a questionnaire of 19 questions structured into 5 blocks the seven participants provided key information during two months, February and November, 2020 (see Table 1):

Table 1: Characteristics of the participants

Code	Gender	Profession
HCC	Man	Communications consultant
HGSD	Man	Global Sales Director
MAC	Woman	Communications company director
MPAC	Woman	Professor and communications company director
HGML	Man	Global Luxury Marketing
MPIM	Woman	Professor of fashion and intangibles management
MAC2	Woman	Communications company director

Source: the author

The process for gathering empirical information was as follows: 1) construct a matrix using codes drawn from the semiotic analysis serving to structure the interview into blocks: Block 1: information of the participant, Block 2: Vogue Spain and the brand strategy, Block 3: strategic intentions of the *fashion film*, Block 4: brand image and awareness, and Block 5: brand associations; and 2) to encode and analyse the responses of participants using these codes.

4. Results

4.1. Semiotic analysis

The film *Europa II* was divided into 4 fragments, indicating the duration of each: prologue, presentation of the brand, meeting of Yao Yao-Ingrid, and game of Yao Yao and Ingrid for *Europa II*. The contents/events of each fragment were described and then analysed to identify the cultural references embedded in each fragment.

Table 2: Identified references or values

Fragment	Synthesis of the identified references or values
1) Prologue: presentation of the videogame *Europa II* and its mission. Yao Yao plays with the Arcade videogame until her boss unplugs the machine. Duration: 00:00 - 00:42	Nostalgia, allusions to a 1980's aesthetic (video Arcade); feminism in relation to various fields: 1) the conquest of space (women included in this endeavour); 2) women playing videogames, when women are underrepresented in this context (especially in the narration of videogames); and 3) music, the lead singer of the band in soundtrack is a young woman, so connecting with the target audience of the brand.
2) Presentation of the brand: appearance of Vogue in the credits while Ingrid arrives at the bar. Duration: 00:43 - 01:13	Science fiction films, using a sci-fi aesthetic recalling films such as *Blade Runner* (Deeley, Laurizika & Scott, 1982), and fashion, with the clear presence of the Vogue, contextualising the narrative with music and Ingrid walking dreamily down a hallway.
3) Meeting of Yao Yao-Ingrid: interaction between the two until the token is inserted in the machine to restart the game. Duration: 01:14 - 04:07	Science fiction films, as the *Europa II* universe alludes to social strata including 'human' / 'non-human', 'dominator' / 'dominated'; feminism in relation to the music: the song in this fragment coincides with the moment of liberation of the protagonists; and feminism in relation to videogames since a woman finds the key to entering in the game and defy a whole set of rules.
4) Game of Yao Yao and Ingrid for *Europa II*: the protagonists enter the videogame itself and defeat their final opponent (final credits included). Duration: 04:08 - 07:32	Science fiction films, as the protagonists enter the game universe the real world is transformed, inviting first Yao Yao to defy the rules and finally both fight and win against the *final boss*; feminism, as both protagonists break the rules and save *Europa II*, a metaphor for the new roles of women. In turn, feminism connects to other fields: 1) videogames, given the role taken on by the protagonists in the *Europa II* universe; and 2) science fiction films since both transmit their feminine essence to the virtual world, achieving their goal.

Source: the author

The references or values identified in each fragment are shown in Table 2. The perceived nostalgia for an earlier videogame aesthetic and cinematic references to previous decades suggest we are within a world where everything is possible, where the feminine takes on a newfound protagonism. Feminism is thus associated with the world of videogames, both at an extradiegetic (the protagonists play the videogame), and diegetic level (the protagonists are inside the game and save *Europa II*).

Feminine ability, tied to the cinematographic imaginary, specifically to science fiction, suggests a vision of a capable, modern womanhood (here fashion is another key element with participating firms) of the future. Here, Vogue looks to both present and future, to a youthful, active, dynamic, uninhibited femininity. The aesthetic *surround* is reinforced by the music, by a group (*MOW*) which connects with this type of woman and the contemporary digital environment (MOW's success is largely due to digital platforms).

According to this analysis, Vogue is clearly aiming at a young audience, with specific tastes, interests and concerns. The aim is not to offer fashion, but rather a vision of femininity and of the world. Together, these references, signifying a set of implicit meanings, create a symbolic character representing the target audience Vogue intends to attract, thus, revitalising the brand with a contemporary and potentially viral high-end format (recall the case of Burberry mentioned above).

4.2. Interviews with experts

According to experts, the target audience of Vogue magazine are middle, upper-middle and upper class women, aged from 30 to 55, lovers of fashion and "interested in personal image, design and their social image" (HCC). The values most associated with Vogue Spain are: luxury, fashion, exclusivity, elegance and style (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Value tree of Vogue Spain

Source: the author

As a format, the *fashion film* is an increasingly prevalent, hybrid genre which, along with other formats, offers a space for experimentation and creativity serving "to give an exclusive form of materiality to intangible luxury" (MPIM). *Fashion films* are therefore ideal for generating *buzz*, awareness and consumer loyalty. *Fashion films* in general invite artistic and aesthetic experimentation, "it is culture, modernity, fashion, experimentation, etc." (MPIM).

All participants in the study agreed that *Europa II* represents a transgressive bid to rejuvenate the brand image of Vogue Spain and reach new audiences: "a younger audience that, most likely, does not have an emotional connection to the brand" (MAC2). The film offers a fresh image, "international and avant-garde, emphasising fashion and style" (HCC), and no doubt will serve to connect with a younger audience providing Vogue perseveres in using the appropriate channels and media to reach this target. This cannot be an isolated attempt since 'one off' actions have no lasting impact.

All participants, with one exception, agreed that this represents a break with Vogue's traditional communication strategy which, given its originality and creativity, successfully enhances brand awareness and recognition. Specifically, "*Europa II* achieves this through its production values: the film and director were widely acclaimed, winning *Best Fashion Film* and *Best Director* at the festival in La Jolla, USA; this can only enhance the image and recognition of the brand" (MAC).

Nevertheless, the majority of participants agreed that the *fashion film* did not influence their own view of the brand, perhaps because they were already familiar with Vogue and perceive it "as an innovative brand pursuing and promoting creative actions such as *Europa II*" (MPIM). Only one participant felt their image of the brand had changed. They considered Vogue a classic brand and viewing the *fashion film* had changed their perception, now describing the brand as: "innovative, eclectic, digital, *vintage*, etc." (MAC).

This is in line with the opinion of the majority of the experts (five), who believe the *fashion film* alters the image of the brand, ascribing new attributes which "modernise the brand and introduce new aesthetic models far removed from a more classic image" (MAC2). According to one participant, *Europa II* contains contemporary cultural references, a reinterpretation that gives the *fashion film* originality while "Vogue resignifies the content, becoming the medium or vehicle through which the audio-visual message is transmitted. In the digital world, the vehicle and the message are the same construct" (MAC).

The opinions of the participants regarding the references/values identified in the semiotic analysis are provided in Table 3:

Table 3: Opinion of the experts regarding identified references or values

References/values	Opinion of the experts
1) Nostalgia	Although the experts do not agree on the value of nostalgia, the majority perceive this as a form of modernity, that is, the evolution of the magazine towards something more modern while recalling the history of the brand.
2) Feminism	Five of the participants did not believe that feminism is an association in this *fashion film* but is related to the history of the Vogue brand itself; the other two did perceive an association, particularly in the relation between the protagonists, a *sorority*, a reflection of contemporary social realities.
3) Science fiction and fashion	While participants considered the association between science fiction and Vogue to be a way to refresh the image of the brand and an artistic technique, they did note the connection between science fiction and fashion, clearly present in the *fashion film Europa II*. One participant believed this connected with feminism by using sci-fi as a means for the protagonists to achieve their dreams; as another participant remarked, its allows them to "dream, laugh and enjoy" (MPAC).
4) Videogame	In the case of the association with videogames the responses were mixed: two participants did not find any link and another referred to digitalisation. The participants did connect this with other aspects, such as feminism (by breaking traditional masculine stereotype), modernity and retro, nostalgia which (as noted above) connects with contemporary modernity and with fashion.
5) Soundtrack	The soundtrack of the film exudes modernity and the digital technology as the band's success is largely through online platforms. Another participant perceives the music as fun, quirky, catchy, connecting with the fresh, dynamic image mentioned by three other participants.

Source: the author.

Finally, all the participants believed the association between Vogue and Gucci was apt and fitting. The Gucci brand endows Vogue with an image of luxury and high fashion, attributes most repeated by the experts, in addition to: exclusivity, elitism, differentiation, aspiration, modernity, retro, *vintage*, prestige and notoriety.

To sum up, the *fashion film* is designed to rejuvenate the band image and to connect with younger women; the experts agreed that the associations are well placed, with the appeal to certain nostalgia at the forefront.

It is interesting to note that, according to one participant, interculturality is another association to be taken into account, along with youth, since the age of the protagonists may help connect with younger women, as opposed to Vogue's traditional core audience.

5. Discussion

The first objective of the study was to offer an overview of the origins and sources of *fashion films* and its association with the field of advertising and marketing. As brand actions, these films present associations which serve to enrich perceptions and set out narrative trends that are not separate from the brand, but rather create a universe in which these are prevalent in some form. The *fashion film* is a form of content that "reveals" aspects of the brand, normally without directly or explicitly alluding to it, but furthering *top of mind awareness* of the consumer in a more intense, vivid way. The film *Europa II* meets the theoretical aspects of the *fashion film*, using a technological and interactive narrative (both diegetic and non-diegetic) and through experience; here the experience is that of the protagonists, and in turn represent the "new Vogue woman".

Regarding the second objective of the study, this was also achieved with a semiotic analysis verifying the incorporation of five elements of high fashion narrative proposed by Wang and Juhlin (2020): history, style, characters, scenario and aesthetics; elements which provide the spectator-consumer with an experience related to fashion apparel. Additionally, a number of associations were drawn from the universe presented in *Europa II*, such as: science fiction cult films, the world of videogames, feminism, nostalgia, fashion and music. All of these include references with which the consumer may identify and thus connect them directly or indirectly to the brand that in turn acquires new meanings and associations with certain values in the mind of consumers. These meanings are conjured through a series of associations which connect Vogue with new users. This was confirmed, the final objective of the study, through interviews with seven experts in marketing and communication, the majority of whom perceived *Europa II* as a medium able to carve out new market niches by rejuvenating the brand universe.

In this context, the associations are perceived differently by the participants given the subjectivity of the theme in question: feminism is clearly present in the image of the brand, although, according to a significant majority of participants this is not a "genuine" association that freshly imbues the brand.

However, we observed certain contradictions. Feminism largely serves as a transversal vehicle via cinema and video-games, although some participants did not see the connection in the juxtaposition of "videogames-feminism" and "cinema (science fiction)-feminism". Some participants considered the involvement of women in these worlds to be self-evident and that no specific associations with feminism can be drawn; others dispute the notion that the aesthetics of the film have any relation to feminism. This raises the question: are aesthetics (in video-games or in films) no longer a powerful association for Vogue and therefore not relevant to the message they intend to transmit about women of today? The associations with fashion and music are pervasive through the prism of notions of novelty and differentiation and the *fashion film* offers a particularly differential value to these aspects.

All participants agreed in the effectiveness of *fashion films* in reaching new audiences and rejuvenating brand image, confirming our initial hypothesis; the utility of this format as an artistic product lies in "the creation of a brand imaginary" (Guerrero & González-Díez, 2019: 77) whose principal aim is to position the brand and its values in the mind of the consumer as spectator.

Europa II does not refer to Vogue but rather to the world of its new audience: brave, contemporary, uninhibited women, at home both in the real world and online. Fashion is not a decorative element but an instrument that manifests the capacity of today's woman to operate in the same spaces as men and take part in stories, myths and common dreams. Ingrid and Yao-Yao go far beyond what they could have possibly imagined; we see through specific situations and meanings that narrate the position of the brand, in this case, openness to new audiences. In this sense, the study of the associations underscores their power within the theoretical framework: associations lubricate the performance and value of the brand.

6. Conclusions

Navigating brand stories, creating and/or evaluating subjective interpretations is always a hazardous undertaking. The associations produced by individual perception of a brand are both deeply rooted and elusive, difficult to identify and verbalise. In this case, a semiotic analysis was made of *Europa II* to extract the associations in the form of meanings embedded in popular culture. Although on this occasion the analysis focussed on symbolic values, and so even more open to subjective interpretation, the basic outlines of the strategy can be discerned. We propose hereafter to take a semiotic approach to analysing *fashion films* using transmedia narratives and storytelling that combine diverse associations and to observe their interactions.

The culture of brands, their vision, mission and values, conditioned by KPI's, largely depends on the attributes of the brands and how these are perceived; that is, associations that 'humanise' the brand and position it in the mind of the consumer. Thus, the qualitative is no less important than the quantitative:

the connection of a brand to its clients and *stakeholders* is increasingly subject to emotional factors, and it is therefore imperative to undertake new and innovative actions that are attuned to the needs and desires of consumers.

7. Acknowledgement

8. References

[1] Aaker, D.A. (1991). *Managing brand equity*. Nueva York: The Free Press.

[2] Aaker, D.A. (1996). *Building strong brands*. Nueva York: The Free Press.

[3] Aaker, D. y Álvarez, R. (2014). *Las marcas según Aaker*. Barcelona: Empresa activa.

[4] Ahluwalia, P. y Miller, T. (2014). The prosumer. Social Identities. *Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, *20*(4-6), 259-261. https://doi.org/f9qw

[5] Antolín, R. y Clemente, J. (2017). YouTube como herramienta significativa para la estrategia de comunicación de marcas: caso de estudio de engagement, insight y creatividad de las cinco campañas más relevantes a nivel mundial de la plataforma de video. *Comunicación y Hombre*, (13), 201-216. https://bit.ly/3xFYDf6

[6] Arbaiza, F. (2017). *Marketing experiencial: el marketing a través de las experiencias del consumidor*. Piura: Universidad de Piura, Facultad de Comunicación.

[7] Arbaiza, F. y Huertas, G. (2018). Comunicación publicitaria en la industria de la moda: *branded content*, el caso de los *fashion films*. *Revista de Comunicación*, *17*(1), 9-33. https://doi.org/f9qx

[8] Atwal, G. y Williams, A. (2009). Luxury Brand Marketing-The experience is everything! *Journal of Brand Management*, *16*(5-6), 338-346. https://doi.org/cq853n

[9] Bauman, Z. (2007). *Vida de consumo*. Madrid: Fondo de cultura económica.

[10] BCMA Spain. (s.f.). Qué es Branded Content para nosotros y cómo puede resultarnos útil. https://bit.ly/2YiSvfl

[11] Bessy, M. y Duca, L. (1961). *Georges Méliès, Mage*. París: Pauvert.

[12] Buffo, S. (2017). Brand narration and fashion films. *Journalism and Mass Communication*, *7*(6), 292-304. https://doi.org/f9qz

[13] Caerols, R. y de la Horra, Y. (2015). Fórmulas creativas en la publicidad de moda: un análisis de Madrid Fashion Film Festival y su impacto en las redes sociales. *Prisma Social*, (14), 336-378. https://bit.ly/2RiSqFb

[14] Casetti, F. y DiChio, F. (2007). *Cómo analizar un film*. Barcelona: Paidós.

[15] Costa-Sánchez, C. (2014). El cambio que se viene. Audiovisual branded content. *Revista Telos: Cuadernos de comunicación e innovación*, (99), 84-93. https://bit.ly/3vvfgba

[16] De Assis, J. (2014). Publicidad y Branded Entertainment. Interactividad y otros códigos de entretenimiento. *Revista Adcomunica*, *7*, 87–106. https://doi.org/dk7c

[17] Del Pino, C.; Castelló, A. y Ramos-Soler, I. (2013). *La comunicación en cambio constante. Branded content, Community Management, Comunicación 2.0 y Estrategia en medios sociales*. Madrid: Fragua.

[18] Del Pino, C. y Castelló, A. (2015). La comunicación publicitaria se pone de moda: branded content y fashion films. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación*, *6*(1), 105-128. https://doi.org/f9q3

[19] Díaz, P. y García, L. (2016). Fashion films as a new communication format to build fashion brands. *Communication & Society*, *29*(2), 45-61. https://doi.org/f9q4

[20] Ediciones Condé Nast. (2018). Vogue España 30 años. Media Information 2018. https://bit.ly/3eKzW8x

[21] Evans, C. (2001). The Enchanted Spectacle. *Fashion Theory*, *5*(3), 271-310. https://doi.org/fdrc7h

[22] Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of consumer research*, *24*(4), 343-373. https://doi.org/gs6

[23] Gambetti, R. C. y Graffigna, G. (2011). The concept of engagement. A systematic analysis of the ongoing marketing debate. *International Journal of Market Research*, *52*(6), 801-826. https://doi.org/b8bf9g

[24] García, L. I. (2017). Influencia del contenido publicado en Instagram por influencers en la imitación de estereotipos. *CUCEA*. https://bit.ly/2AlaFvD

[25] Gobé, M. (2010). *Emotional branding: The new paradigm for connecting brands to people*. Nueva York: Allworth.

[26] Godin, S. y Bravo, J. A. (2006). ¿Todos los comerciales son mentirosos?: Los actuales vendedores de sueños. Barcelona: Ediciones Robinbook.

[27] Guerrero, B. y González-Díez, L. (2019). El fashion film como un nuevo elemento comunicativo en el mundo de la moda: el caso de Nina L'Eau, de Eugenio Recuenco. *Revista Internacional de Investigación en Comunicación aDResearch ESIC*, *20*(20), 66-79. https://doi.org/f9q5

[28] Imbert, G. (2003). *El zoo visual. De la televisión espectacular a la televisión especular*. Barcelona: Gedisa.

[29] Kam, L.; Robledo-Dioses, K. y Atarama-Rojas, T. (2019). Los fashion films como contenido particular del marketing de moda: un análisis de su naturaleza en el contexto de los mensajes híbridos. *Anagramas Rumbos y Sentidos de la Comunicación*, *17*(34), 203-224. https://doi.org/f9q6

[30] Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of marketing*, *57*(1), 1-22. https://doi.org/cts

[31] Keller, K.L. (2008). *Administración estratégica de marca*. México: Pearson Educación.

[32] Kotler, P. y Keller, P.L. (2012). *Dirección de marketing*. México: Pearson Educación.

[33] Kotler, P.; Kartajaya, H. y Setiawan, I. (2018). *Marketing 4.0. Transforma tu estrategia para atraer al consumidor digital*. Madrid: LID Editorial.

[34] Latif, W. B.; Islam, M. A. y Noor, I. M. (2014). Building Brand Awareness in the Modern Marketing Environment: A Conceptual Model. *International Journal of Business and Technopreneurship*, *4*(1), 69-82. https://n9.cl/tc7ax

[35] Lawford, V. (1985). *Horst: His Work and His*. Harmondsworth: Viking.

[36] Leese, E. (1991). *Costume Design in the Movies*. Nueva York: Dover Publications.

[37] Lisberger, S. (Director) y Kushner, D. (Productor). (1982). *Tron*. [Película]. EEUU: Walt Disney Productions.

[38] Llopis, S. E. (2015). *Crear la marca global: Modelo práctico de creación e internacionalización de marcas*. Pozuelo de Alarcón: ESIC.

[39] Luque, S. y Pérez, C. (2018). El empoderamiento femenino en las revistas de moda. ¿Realidad o aspiración? *RiCH: Revista internacional de Historia de la Comunicación*, *1*(10), 122-149. https://doi.org/f9q9

[40] Manlow, V. y Nobbs, K. (2013). Form and function of luxury flagships. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, *17*(1), 49-64. https://doi.org/f9rb

[41] Martin, P. (2015). Fashion films: un vehículo comunicativo de lujo. En J. Benavides (Ed.), *El nuevo diálogo social: Organizaciones, públicos y ciudadanos* (pp.775-786). Valencia: Campgràphic.

[42] Michaud, Y. (2015). *El nuevo lujo: experiencias, arrogancia, autenticidad*. Madrid: Taurus.

[43] Mijovic, N. (2013). Narrative form and the rhetoric of Fashion in the promotional Fashion film. *Film, Fashion & Consumption*, *2*(2), 175-186. https://doi.org/f9rc

[44] Miller, C. R. (1984). Genre as social action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *70*(2), 151-167. https://doi.org/c5bb2d

[45] Miller, S. (2007). Fashion as Art; is Fashion Art? *Fashion Theory, 11*(1), 25-40. https://doi.org/bd55w6

[46] Moore, C. y Birtwistle, G. (2004). The Burberry business model: creating an international luxury fashion Brand. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, *32*(8), 412-422. https://doi.org/d6kdv3

[47] Pérez, J.A. (2014). *Cine, enseñanza y enseñanza del cine*. Madrid: Ediciones Morata.

[48] Ramos, M. (2006). Cuando la marca ofrece entretenimiento: aproximación al concepto de advertainment. *Questiones Publicitarias*, *1*(11), 33-49. https://bit.ly/2SIRP64

[49] Ramos-Serrano, M. y Pineda, A. (2009). El advertainment y las transformaciones de los formatos en el ámbito publicitario: el caso de los fashion films. *Tripodos*, *Extra 2009*(2), 729-737. https://bit.ly/3nF8MUq

[50] Ricoeur, P. (1996). *Sí mismo como otro*. Madrid: Siglo XXI.

[51] Rubalcava, C. A.; Sánchez-Tovar, Y. y Sánchez-Limón, M. L. (2019). La conciencia de marca en redes sociales: impacto en la comunicación boca a boca. *Estudios Gerenciales*, *35*(152), 313-320. https://doi.org/f9rd

[52] Scott, R. (Director); Deeley, M. y de Laurizika, C. (Productores). (1982). *Blade Runner*. [Película]. EEUU: Warner Bros., Ladd Company y Shaw Brothers.

[53] Serrano, S. (2001). *La semiótica. Una introducción a la teoría de los signos*. Vilassar de Dalt: Montesinos.

[54] Skjulstad, S. y Morrison, A. (2016). Fashion Film and Genre Ecology. *The Journal of Media Innovations*, *3*(2), 20-41. https://doi.org/f9rf

[55] Taylor, M. (2005). Culture transition: fashion's cultural dialogue between commerce and art. *Fashion Theory*, *4*(9), 445-460. https://doi.org/b4ptx7

[56] Toffler, A. (1980). *La tercera ola*. Barcelona: Plaza & Janés.

[57] Uhlirova, M. (2010). Snapshot: Dress in Czech Film of the 1920s and 1930s. En D. Bartlett y P. Smith (Eds.), *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion*, 9 (pp. 137-140). Oxford y Nueva York: Berg.

[58] Uhlirova, M. (2013). 100 years of fashion film: frameworks and histories. *Fashion Theory*, *17*(2), 137-157. https://doi.org/f9rg

[59] Velasco, A. M. (2019). La moda en los medios de comunicación: de la prensa femenina tradicional a la política y los/as influencers. *Prisma Social*, (24), 153-185. https://bit.ly/3vvhTK4

[60] Vogue España. (2018). Europa II. https://bit.ly/3DOX2X7

[61] Wang, J. y Juhlin, O. (2020). Unpacking Fashion Film for Digital Design. *Fashion Practice-The Journal of Design Creative Process & the Fashion Industry*, *12*(1), 126-151. https://doi.org/gjdq6t

[62] Wickstrom, M. (2006). *Performing Consumers: Global Capital and Its Theatrical Seduction*. Nueva York: Routledge.

Notes

1. For this profile, the importance of *influencers* and social media are ranked fourth and fifth, respectively.

2. The interchangeability of these terms is disputed given the subtle differences between the two concepts. For Kam, Robledo-Dioses and Atarama-Rojas (2019), *branded entertainment* contains no allusions to the brand or product. The aim is to communicate a brand universe (values and community); in contrast, *advertainment* involves the explicit presence and positioning of the brand or product within the narrative. *Fashion films* range between the two depending on its narrative structure.

3. We can identify the following classification: in the dimension of product associations we find associations with the type of product, with its attributes, with quality, with usage, with the users of the product, with a country or organisation; for the business dimension we find associations with social responsibility, perceived quality, innovation (there are companies whose basic premiss is constant innovation, customer service, success, and its global/local characteristics; there are also personal associations, including associations with a personality or the concept of client-

brand relationship; and symbolic associations: the visual imaginary of the brand or the history/heritage of the brand (Aaker (1996) in Llopis, 2015).

4. When referring to symbols, the author especially focusses on brand logos, although clearly anything representing a brand can be a symbol. In this study we explore the importance of the symbol as association in terms of the visual aesthetics of *Europa II*, but focussing particularly on its meanings, references and/or values.

Dr. Daniel ZOMEÑO
Universitat Jaume I. Spain. zomeno@uji.es. http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0109-9578

Dr. Rocío BLAY-ARRÁEZ
Universitat Jaume I. Spain. rblay@uji.es. http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4815-0588

New products and services offered to brands by the main Spanish newspapers: branded content and native advertising

Nuevos productos y servicios ofertados a las marcas por las principales cabeceras españolas: branded content y publicidad nativa

Abstract
This research analyses the communication context arising from the digital revolution that has led brands to reconsider some of their strategies for reaching consumers effectively, prioritising creativity in relation to non-advertising products, particularly content generation. In this context, the media present themselves as strategic partners for brands, moving from being mere advertising spaces to acting as consultants and providers of high-added-value editorial products. Qualitative fieldwork was performed in two phases. The first consisted of in-depth interviews with a qualified sample – those responsible for branded content in the principal Spanish media. The second was content analysis of the websites of the same media, analysing the products and services they offer and how they are defined. The results explore the branded content departments and businesses of the main Spanish media, making it possible to provide a new catalogue and description of the products and services they offer to brands, which help them consolidate what is, for the moment, an unusual relationship. These conclusions show how the media business model is being transformed and generate knowledge with clear possibilities for transfer.

Resumen
Esta investigación analiza el contexto comunicativo nacido de la revolución digital y que ha llevado a las marcas a replantear parte de sus estrategias para llegar al consumidor de forma eficaz, dando prioridad a la creación de productos creativos de aspecto no publicitario, entre los que destaca la generación de contenidos. Los medios de comunicación se erigen como un partner estratégico para las marcas pasando de ser un espacio publicitario, a convertirse en consultor y proveedor de productos editoriales de valor añadido. El trabajo de campo de corte cualitativo ha tenido dos fases: entrevistas en profundidad a una muestra cualificada como son los responsables de branded content de los principales medios españoles y el análisis de contenido de sus sedes web, analizando los productos y servicios ofertados y cómo los definen. Los resultados se adentran en los departamentos y empresas de branded content de las principales cabeceras españolas que aportan una novedosa catalogación y descripción de los productos y servicios que están ofreciendo a las marcas y que les ha llevado a consolidar una relación inusual hasta la fecha. Estas conclusiones evidencian la transformación de los modelos de negocio de los medios y generan un conocimiento con posibilidades de transferencia.

1. Introduction

Content generation has become a great communication opportunity for brands, which have been seeing for some time that saturation advertising techniques using one-way, intrusive approaches make their actions less effective. There is a growing cooperation between the media and brands that have found a way of connecting with their audience using branded content (Miotto-Payne, 2019: 27-28). Meanwhile, because of their expertise in audience creation and management, and data analysis, the media have become their partners.

With the technological transformation of the communication ecosystem and changes in consumer behaviour, marketing and communication directors are increasingly turning to the media's branded content departments to create content that can be integrated organically into their conversations with their audience. This is a leap from the traditional advertising campaign to a brand action that provides valuable experiences through relevant content. Engagement, branded content and native advertising are clearly concepts related to user involvement and the way the message is presented (Papí-Gálvez, 2015: 301-309). The research conducted by Zamith et al. 2021: 14) shows that brands can get better results and more attention by non-intrusively integrating their branded content advertisements into editorial content.

The new sections in charge of responding to these demands from brands are known as branded content departments. And in recent years, the media have invested a great deal of resources in creating these departments within their main titles, following the lead of their international counterparts. These laboratories of innovation are beginning to permeate newsrooms and they provide a response to concerns and awareness at corporate and business level, driving changes in day-to-day routines emerging from below as a result of the inevitable transformation processes involved in digital competition (Trillo and Alberich, 2020: 368).

Although the process is still a recent one in Spain, all the communication groups and the main newspapers already have departments that are experimenting with new products and services for brands. These are the subject of study for this research, in which our main interest is to look at a phenomenon in the process of development. We also need to review of the concepts of branded content and native advertising, as their innovative nature means confusion over terms can create distortions about their true value. As in the early days of any new discipline, in this field we encounter terminological confusion, which means certain formats are identified with different names and vice versa (Regueira, 2012, 109). The industry's agreement on certain definitions and the detection of new products and services will be important in order to guarantee high quality standards. It is therefore essential to generate knowledge about how the main Spanish titles are currently developing them.

1.1. Change of advertising model

The shift from the dissemination model to the network model, typical of the digital era, has produced much more significant change in the social and cultural sphere than in the technological one (Jenkins, 2008). One of the changes with the greatest impact has been on the public, with the mutation occurring in their adaptation and interaction as a result of maximum connectivity, moving from the human-mass to human-speed not subject to any programmatic logic (Martínez-Sáez and García-Cubell, 2018: 314). The power of consumers via the internet allows them to be very selective with the content they consume and look only for what provides value and is relevant to them (Scolari, 2013). Also, by turning every web user into a content producer, the internet has entered into a process of exponential growth of information which, together with the fragmentation of audiences and the growth of multiscreen consumption, has made attention a scarce commodity (Selva and Caro, 2016: 644).

Tim Wu says we live in an "attention economy", where a plethora of channels give us more choices, which means content producers must work harder to secure the increasingly scarce resource of attention. As Giffard (2013) (quoted by Giraldo and Fernandez, 2020: 4) describes, in this context, time becomes a determining variable and this leads to a battle in the cultural industries to capture this free time. Meanwhile, social media are at an advantage in the attention market.

Commercial communication seeks to overcome the intrusiveness of traditional approaches by promoting the emergence of formats that do not interrupt the user (Selva and Caro, 2016: 643). In fact, digital display advertisement formats have not replaced the revenue lost from shrinking traditional forms of advertising. The data suggests that people do not see them and that many of their clicks are accidental. Audiences are irritated by pop-up adverts and auto-play videos, which has led to ad blocking technology becoming popular and effective (Sirrah, 2019).

Advertising needs to reach consumers who are more critical, proactive and professionalised in their relationship with brands, and credibility has become a scarce commodity (Castelló-Martínez, 2018: 85). Attracting consumers should no longer be the objective. Instead, brands need to retain them by

developing lasting relationships with users (Regueira, 2012: 66) in order to build a community and secure their loyalty with conversations that help to reinforce engagement. If it does not take account of the fact that audiences are active and social (Papí-Gálvez, 2015), advertising can be intrusive. The key lies in giving it the right form.

1.2. Change of model in the media

Technological changes have also brought about a radical transformation in the consumption of news content and in the ways the media operate. The shift from paper to the online format and the technological evolution of the media system itself open up a scenario moving towards more interactive and collaborative journalism. Content production, work routines, media and distribution strategies, and business models are undergoing major changes (Casero-Ripollés, 2010): 600). The intrusion of the internet and social media has radically changed the use and consumption of information and the emergence of new native digital media and networks as alternative information channels has coincided with this change in the business model (Villafañe *et al.*, 2020: 7) opening up a debate about media sustainability.

Media must listen to their audiences and learn from them if they are to enjoy long-term success (Jenkins *et al.*, 2013: 24). The combination of networks and digital technologies has allowed citizens to expand journalistic content or directly create new news stories (Scolari, 2013). In this process the media is trying to offer increasingly personalised content while audiences are increasingly filtering and selecting, although the criteria they use are not very clear. There is clearly an oversupply of information, and, to that contained in the media, we must add the content that reaches people via social networks, which seems to interest them more (Villafañe *et al.*, 2020: 7).

In terms of revenue, we find that despite the fact that audiences are more global these days, it is difficult to monetise them. One of the main causes of this has been the media's commitment from the very beginning to a digital business model advocating free online content. This is something their audiences quickly became accustomed to (Casero-Ripollés, 2010: 598 and Casero-Ripollés, 2014: 258). Most media companies operating in the digital world depend on online advertising revenues, as Boczkowski and Mitchelstein (2017) point out. These have grown, but they are a long way from compensating for the fall in print advertising revenues, as large platforms such as Facebook and Google take the lion's share (cited by Valero and González, 2018: 559).

In this quest for monetisation, one of the most interesting alternatives to display advertising is native advertising, which allows news publishers to charge brands for work that has traditionally been done by PR companies. If native advertising proves to be a viable business model, it could help sustain a struggling industry by providing informative and entertaining advertising, which would also expand journalistic practice. If proves to be the case, the industry should expect an increase in the use of native advertising (Ferrer, 2016: 9).

1.3. Branded content, native advertising and opportunities for brands and media

Although the origins of content creation by brands date back to the late 19th century (Aguilera *et al.*, 2015: 524; Rodríguez-Ferrándiz, 2017), the exponential increase has been in recent years, as it has become an essential part of branding (Stalman, 2014). Brands have joined in with the phenomenon of branded content, which consists of creating relevant, entertaining or interesting content that does not look like advertising. This is used to create audiences and connect with them (Del Pino-Romero and Castelló-Martínez, 2015), as well as transmitting the values associated with the brand, which is kept in the background (IAB, 2019: 8).

The boom in native advertising has been considerable. In its article "The Ultimate Native Ads Guide for 2020" the Native Advertising Institute describes this as advertising that coincides with the content of the media outlet in which it appears in both form and function. The aim is not to interrupt readers, so it must be content that is perceived as organic, even if it is paid for by the brand. Native advertising can take a wide variety of forms, ranging from sponsored posts on social media platforms, sponsored articles and videos on sites that publish original content, and sponsored links and recommendation blocks in content providers and internet search engines (Wojdynski and Golan, 2016: 1,403).

Native advertising within media must rely on a newspaper's ability to transfer the narrative credibility of its newsroom to the branded content department (Sirrah, 2019). These departments appeared for the first time in native digital media, such as BuzzFeed and the *Huffington Post*, which adopted native advertising. Its economic success was such (Chittum, 2014) that these were soon joined by big titles such as the *New York Times*, which created the T-Brand Studio, or *The Guardian* with Guardian Labs, taking this phenomenon to a higher level of professionalisation (cited by Ferrer, 2016: 3-9).

According to the *Native Advertising Institute,* native advertising generated 20% of total advertising revenue for news media in 2017, and the figure is expected to reach 36% for 2021. The percentages are

even higher for magazine publishers, who earned up to 31% of advertising revenue in this way in 2017, which is expected to increase to 46% in 2021. This is due to the fact that personalised content allows publishers to diversify their revenue stream, according to Lynch (2018). As Sirrah (2019) states, they are now actively involved in attracting and working with advertisers (cited by Apostol, 2020: 61).

Communication and marketing specialists work with publishers because they want to be associated with the trust people place in the media. The media have therefore begun to offer a series of products and services more typical of advertising agencies than media outlets, creating an intimate relationship between brands and publishers that deserves close examination (Sirrah, 2019).

2. Methodology

The general aim of this qualitative research is to generate knowledge about the new products and services linked to the creation of content for brands by the branded content departments of the main Spanish newspapers. The specific objectives are:

1. To define, catalogue and describe the products and services generated.

2. To open up a debate on terminology for editorial products, branded content and native advertising.

3. To detect new brand strategies in cooperation with the media.

In order to obtain the holistic knowledge required in qualitative research (Soler, 2011: 191) two pieces of fieldwork have been carried out:

1. Expert opinions (Lafuente and Marín, 2008: 16), in which finding out about the professional routine of the managers of the departments under study has been fundamental. This has been done using in-depth interviews carried out at the newspapers themselves.

2. A content analysis of the websites of the companies in the sample, with two units of analysis under study:

- The definition of the business unit itself.

- The presentation and definition of the products and services it offers.

The sample is selected from the study universe obtained from ComScore's June 2019 Ranking News. This ranking is a reference for industry professionals, as it measures media audiences on different digital platforms.

Figure 1. Ranking News ComScore Top 30 News, June 2019.

	Media		Total Unique Visitors/Viewers (000)			% Reach		
			Total Digital Population	Desktop	Mobile	Total Digital Population	Desktop	Mobile
	Total Internet : Total Audience		33,777	22,236	30,641	100.0	100.0	100.0
	News/Information		33,243	21,784	30,396	98.4	98.0	99.2
1	Vocento		25,809	6,671	23,922	76.4	30.0	78.1
2	Prisa		25,768	7,733	23,500	76.3	34.8	76.7
3	RCS MediaGroup - Unidad Editorial		25,360	7,072	22,953	75.1	31.8	74.9
4	Prensa Ibérica		24,922	5,612	23,127	73.8	25.2	75.5
5	Grupo Godo		23,719	4,440	22,096	70.2	20.0	72.1
6	Henneo		20,732	3,298	19,044	61.4	14.8	62.2
7	ELCONFIDENCIAL.COM		15,611	2,852	13,839	46.2	12.8	45.2
8	ElEspañol Sites		15,133	2,430	13,592	44.8	10.9	44.4
9	OKDIARIO.COM		10,775	1,151	9,936	31.9	5.2	32.4
10	Grupo Planeta Sites		10,681	1,921	9,319	31.6	8.6	30.4
11	Eldiario.es Sites		10,045	1,674	8,834	29.7	7.5	28.8
12	Microsoft News		9,591	8,863	2,202	28.4	39.9	7.2
13	ElEconomista		9,477	2,519	7,679	28.1	11.3	25.1
14	Yahoo-HuffPost News Network		9,380	1,510	8,308	27.8	6.8	27.1
15	La Voz De Galicia		7,940	909	7,217	23.5	4.1	23.6
16	Xataka		7,627	2,263	5,948	22.6	10.2	19.4
17	PUBLICO.ES Sites		7,349	993	6,572	21.8	4.5	21.4
18	Periodista Digital Sites		7,298	373	6,982	21.6	1.7	22.8
19	Agencia Europa Press		6,706	1,291	5,714	19.9	5.8	18.6
20	Pelmorex Corp.		6,372	1,557	5,184	18.9	7.0	16.9
21	Grupo ADSLZone		6,370	2,120	4,750	18.9	9.5	15.5
22	Libertad Digital		6,272	743	5,676	18.6	3.3	18.5
23	ESdiario Sites		5,539	142	5,397	16.4	0.6	17.6
24	AccuWeather Sites		5,370	230	5,165	15.9	1.0	16.9
25	Upday (Mobile App)		4,570	N/A	4,570	13.5	N/A	14.9
26	Vozpopuli.com Sites		4,423	416	4,065	13.1	1.9	13.3
27	Weather Company, The		4,420	42	4,379	13.1	0.2	14.3
28	Grupo El Comercio		4,310	603	3,809	12.8	2.7	12.4
29	Elnacional.cat Sites		4,121	374	3,798	12.2	1.7	12.4
30	BBC Sites		4,035	895	3,313	11.9	4.0	10.8

This ranking confirmed the need to interview experts from four types of media to obtain knowledge of their different business models, as each of them has different experience and different technological development.

- News/information category. Selection of communication groups with the main traditional media titles.
- News/information category. Selection of native digital media.
- Niche content category. Selection of vertical media for specific consumption areas.
- Millennial media category. Selection of media aimed at millennial audiences who use social media as their main channel.

This categorisation of the media has resulted in a convenience sample (Gaitán and Piñuel, 1998): 90). The media represented are among the top-ranked media in the 2019 ComScore ranking. The interviewees were 16 executives from 15 media groups or media outlets. All of them are informed subjects who have deep knowledge of the issue we are researching (Gaitán and Piñuel, 1998: 90).

Figure 2. *Sample of managers and groups/media.*

News/Information Communication Teams

HENNEO	**Fedra Valderrey Aldonza** — Branded Content Product Manager
grupoGodo	**Alejando Teodoro** — Brandslab Director
PRENSA IBÉRICA	**Atala Martín** — Branded Content Director
PRISA	**Leyre Rodríguez** — Branded Content Specialist
vocento	**Marta Gesto** — Content Factory Director
Unidad Editorial	**Silvia González y Aurora Yánez** — Heads of the departement of contents and Branded Content

News/Information Digital Natives

EL ESPAÑOL	**Julián Povedano** — Head of Branded Content
El Confidencial	**Alberto Guzmán Luna** — Director of CBrand - Content Agency

Niche Content

CONDÉ NAST	**Jorge Madrid** — Director of the creative agency CNX
HEARST	**Ana Multigner** — Digital Content Director
¡HOLA!	**Gema Jiménez Peral** — Branded Content Director
webedia.	**Alex Ferrero** — Branded Content Director

Millenial Media witth Social Media as main channel

JOT DOWN	**Ángel Fernández** — Director
PlayGround	**Davit Miró** — Chief Revenue Officer
YOROKOBU	**Marcus Hurst** — Head of Branded Content

Source: own creation

These interviews were carried out between 20 November 2019 and 10 July 2020. 12 were face-to-face and they lasted an average of 120 minutes. Only three had to be carried out online because of the pandemic and lockdown. The in-depth interview followed a structured script (Vilches, 2011: 216-219) and the questions asked were organised into four thematic blocks. Conducting the interview in the workplace – in the environment where the activity is carried out – also meant we could prepare checklists in advance.

The interview included open-ended questions and some closed-ended questions with lists of options (Vilches, 2011: 216-219). A horizontal analysis was applied to the results, as the interest lies in the set of responses (Gaitán and Piñuel, 1998: 109). Only when the differences were substantial was the media category specified. Direct quotes from some interviewees will be given in the presentation of the results to illustrate ideas.

Participants in the fieldwork were very interested in the conclusions of the study, as the fact that these departments were set up only recently means they lack any real references. The observation and analysis of the websites was carried out using an analysis template.

This is a methodological approach that meets the fundamental requirements (Álvarez-Gayou 2003: 32-33) of validity, reliability and sample, with the criterion of qualitative representativeness (Wimmer and Dominick, 1996: 67). Finally, a discussion is opened to compare the results. This will help us to suggest critical reflection with practical implications for the future.

3. Results

3.1. The new branded content departments in the Spanish media

This phenomenon, which has its origins in the English-speaking journalistic world, has finally become established in Spain. This is shown in the sample drawn up for the study, in which all media of a certain size have a specific department for creating content for brands.

The traditional relationship between the media and brands was based on the purchase of advertising space. Special services could be offered, but it was not until the arrival of the digital revolution that a new demand from brands arose, as explained by the head of Prisa Brand Solution, Leyre Rodríguez:

> "Brands were very interested in content and, although there was the possibility of advertorials, they started to ask us to write them because, unlike the agencies that write for brands, we write for our audience and we know what to talk about" (Verbatim 10/12/2019).

The exponential increase in recent years in the demand from brands for new editorial products has forced the media to respond with these new departments, as Jorge Madrid of Condé Nast tells us:

> "This is a natural development of our business and our customers' requirements of us. With digital development this has been growing. It has become bigger, more complex, and more sophisticated" (Verbatim 9/07/2020).

This situation requires specialised staff, both in content generation and in marketing and communication strategies. The new departments now lead content projects with brands, achieving workflows that help streamline commissions and channel them via a dedicated team. This has relieved the newsroom of an extra workload that used to generate friction with the sales departments.

Among the features of this phenomenon is its recent creation, as more than two-thirds of the sample of branded content departments have been set up within the last five years and are still involved in a consolidation process. Secondly, there is the large increase in the volume of business and, consequently, the number of professionals who directly or indirectly end up linked to the department, as Ana Multigner, of Hearst, points out:

> "Development was fairly gradual and calm during the first three years, but in the last two years it has been exponential and the structure has grown a lot – the number of workers has too. In the last two years, the work has tripled" (Verbatim 18/12/2019).

In general, we see that these branded content departments enjoy a degree of autonomy within the particular media outlet. Although some of them present themselves as departments or teams that are usually integrated into the business unit, most of them have their own identity projected via digital media, where they set out their value propositions, products and services.

This search for a differentiated identity tends to be especially visible in cases where the creation of content to be disseminated via the brand's own channels, and not in the media outlet itself, is on offer. In some cases, the department transcends the outlet and becomes an advertising agency with a distinct profile of its own.

3.2. New products offered to brands

3.2.1. Native advertising

This is undoubtedly the editorial product that best represents the transformation experienced by brands in relation to the media, as Marta Gesto of Vocento tells us:

> "The brands were already there. They have historically been advertisers. What we are doing now is offering them a new way to reach our readers" (Verbatim 21/11/2019).

Based on the content analysis of the definition and presentation of products and services on websites, as well as from our interviews, it can be stated that a large part of the offer is based on the Branded/ Native Content form included in the *Native Advertising Playbook 2.0*:

> "Brand-paid content is published in the same editorial format used by the media outlet that hosts it. Generally, the content is produced by the publisher's own content teams. This branded content is represented on a page, hosted and served just like all editorial experiences. Scheduling, tracking and reporting are typically provided by the vendor" (IAB, 2019).

According to the IAB, this type of native advertising is also known as branded content, sponsored content or custom content. These terms are often used by the editorial media themselves in labelling such content to make it clear to readers that they are looking at something created by or for a brand.

According to Alejandro Teodoro of Brands Lab, one of the reasons brands are looking at this type of content is the difficulty they now have in getting free media coverage. They are also aware of the importance of native advertising in guaranteeing the impact of a news story and its visibility. The Brands Lab unit, which is responsible for the Godó group's content, describes it on its website as:

> Journalistic-based content for brands that integrates organically into the medium and aligns with our audience's expectations. In this way we provide the content with maximum reach and visibility in an increasingly visual and interactive environment (https://www.godostrategies. com/proyectos/branded-content/, website consulted on 25/11/2020).

And as Sílvia González and Aurora Yañez, from UE Studio, remind us:

> "The user is being given quality content, as the brand's objective is not to sell. Instead, such content is hosted in editorial spaces to generate engagement and allow brands to approach a segmented audience by offering them information that's interesting and useful" (Verbatim 17/12/2019).

Despite the favourable scenario for the development of native advertising, some managers of other media are more cautious and admit that 90% of the content they generate consists of advertorials and only 10% is native advertising. It seems quite common for projects that are originally intended to preserve the editorial value of the content to be altered at the client's request, as Atala Martín of Prensa Ibérica comments:

> "I have a client from a big brand, whose CSR department understands perfectly well that what we are doing is branded content, but they want their brand to be featured, and the brand exposure is so high that in the end I have to say that it is an advertorial" (Verbatim 11/22/2019).

Fedra Valderrey, creative director of Bluemedia, admits that, although it depends on the brand, in general it is difficult to make branded content because it is often confused with advertorials. They are even sent press releases for publication which are referred to as branded content. Despite these nuances, the vast majority of the media interviewed recognise that this new product is increasingly in demand and that it is becoming well established.

3.2.2. Branded content

The media that have established an advertising agency relationship with brands create content that is designed to be distributed in the brand's own channels. Their editorial intelligence and knowledge of the complex distribution system, rather than the reputational component of the media outlet or its audience reach, are therefore determining factors. Some media have developed two lines of business, as in the case of Condé Nast, as Jorge Madrid explains:

> "The natural evolution of the business was that our clients started doing native advertising and are now creating content for their own channels. So we've gone on to provide an agency service specialising in content creation" (Verbatim 9/07/2020).

This is how they define themselves on their website:

> Condé Nast Creative Studio is a multidisciplinary team that creates effective, high-quality branded content by combining more than a century of editorial experience with the implementation of data analysis in our work process. We have precise, extensive knowledge of which topics and which formats connect best with each audience in each context (http://www.condenaststories.es/adn/, website accessed on: 10/12/2020).

One of the communication groups that best represents this revolution in the search for new business models is Webedia. Alex Ferrero explains that their projects are divided between content for brands located in the various Webedia Publishing titles, where brands pay to appear (paid media) and projects where the content is hosted on brand channels (own media). He is confident in his use of terminology and refers to all content created for brands as branded content, whereas native advertising refers to that hosted by any of the group's titles.

Another business model similar to a digital agency is that of Playground Studio, which began as a native digital media outlet with large audiences. Here, relationships with brands are classified depending on whether they use native advertising and are integrated into the editorial medium with sponsored content in its star formats, such as video news, or whether they turn to Playground to seek expertise in content creation and distribution, replicating successful formulas from the brand's own platforms. Playground's Chief Revenue Officer, Davit Miró says:

> "We have a media outlet and we have an agency. The media outlet is the leader with millennial audiences on social media and for the agency it is very important that the media outlet is visible and has a leading position in the ranking for social video audiences or that it has viral hits. That's where the opportunities have come from, and some brands have asked us to do their content campaigns and take them to the networks" (Interview 13/10/2019).

At Yorokobu, it is curious to note that the branded content agency was born in parallel with the editorial project:

> "We were clear from the beginning that we would generate branded content to provide a solution for brands that want to be integrated into the magazine's content. We create projects with a strategy to ensure that they work very well and do not deceive anyone, in order to have credibility. We need to have a content agency with a strategy and with creativity that gives value to companies, because otherwise the media outlet will not survive. That's the model and we feel quite comfortable with it, especially considering that we hardly have any display or programme advertising" (Interview 11/12/2019).

3.2.3. Other products

We found other approaches related to content creation, but which expand the business model beyond the publishing field. One of the most in-demand in recent years has been event organisation. Most media already offer the creation of events that help transfer the content strategy into the real world, as Marta Gesto explains:

> "We can bring in a lot of people and we can help brands create industry-wide events all over Spain with the help of our titles" (Interview 21/11/2019).

The media have understood the need to carry out actions that transcend their titles, as Ana Multigner explains:

> "We are already a very 360-degree medium. I can make you a transmedia campaign that goes from digital to paper to physical, in the form of an event" (Interview 18/12/2019).

This product is particularly important in the proposals designed in *El Confidencial*, as Alberto Guzmán tells us:

> "An event is created either inside or outside *El Confidencial* and we bring the client in with four or five other stakeholders. A script is drawn up for this round table so that the subject matter does not go too far off track, and a moderator is appointed to ensure that the script pre-established with the client is followed and that the topics that are crucial to the client are discussed. A journalist covers what's going on and takes a few shots of each of the speakers. Photos are taken and we record a video. In the end, the client has an article with a photo and a video summary of everything that happened" (Interview 10/12/2019).

The creation of events is now well established, according to Jorge Madrid, and new opportunities are opening up with online events.

Another product is e-commerce and affiliation strategies and many brands go to the media to establish cooperation focused on sales. This requires its own strategies, however, which is something that is still not properly understood, as Ana Multigner warns:

> "Now the new buzzword is e-commerce. But we are working hard to spread the word to clients. If you want, I can make you an e-commerce proposal, but that is not branded content. With branded content you are not going to sell" (Interview 18/12/2019).

For monetising content with affiliation models, media agreements with the online retail giant Amazon are the dominant trend. It should be noted that the media are generating deep knowledge of data management that has established new business models associated with the analytical aspect, extracting valuable information from big data, as Alejandro Teodoro tells us:

> "We work on the market research part; that is, once a branded content action is finished, we provide you with information about the users who have consumed that information. We set up a panel to achieve a qualitative rather than a quantitative impact" (Interview 10/07/2020).

3.3. Services offered to brands

The service portfolio of branded content departments has also evolved and they have begun to offer a series of services typical of the marketing or corporate communication sectors, thanks to the diverse skill sets of their staff.

On Webedia's website we can see that they offer everything from strategic consultancy with SEO and digital asset audits to conversation analysis or studies of territories and competitors. This is in addition to designing immersive experiences, content and audiovisual productions, as well as content distribution and channel management. The way these services cut across boundaries allows the media to provide full coverage of the brands.

3.3.1. Consultancy and strategy

Media business units have been transformed from a commercial function aimed at selling space to become part of the process of creating branded content from a more strategic point of view, explains Jorge Madrid:

> "We don't have advertising salespeople, we have consultants. You have some needs as a brand and I need to give you a solution that includes many tools. A true joint venture is set up and they allow us to give them advice. They are increasingly asking us for long-term strategies and campaigns to support them, to create audiences like the media do" (Interview 9/07/2020).

As Marta Gesto recognises, in the creation of branded content there is a very important element of strategy and this has been verified in the departments analysed. The vast majority have told us the great commitment that has been made both in training sales teams and in incorporating consultancy skills. Alberto Guzmán says:

> "It was necessary to improve the reputation of *El Confidencial* as a serious company that advises you. Everyone knew that we write well, but what people didn't know is that we also do corporate communication strategies because there are consultants here as well as journalists" (Interview 10/12/2019).

This has taken the form of a communications agency that creates strategic proposals and press kits as well as training spokespeople. These services are presented on their website, where they explicitly state that they specialise in strategy, content and digital media, helping brands achieve their targets in terms of positioning, reputation and influence (https://brands.elconfidencial.com, website consulted on: 7/12/2020).

Others, like Webedia, are also clear examples of the importance this type of service has acquired when they explain that, thanks to their strategy department, they can offer market research as well as digital consultancy on the analytical side.

3.3.2 Creativity and production

One of the most disruptive consequences of media convergence was the pivot to video within the print media, which brought about restructuring, such as the incorporation of professionals specialising in technology, to cope with new formats and narratives. The search for a quality user experience with the development of multimedia articles, as well as the exploration of interactive formats to increase user engagement (Figure 5), has led the media to hire human resources from other industries.

These changes have become opportunities for media companies to explore new business avenues, such as digital product development and design. As Jorge Madrid explains:

> "This department is essential because we can use the digital innovation we need to address our titles' redesign requirements for our customers when we create a website for them, for example" (Interview 9/07/2020).

The support the branded content department receives from the more technological departments enables it to develop a more elaborate creative product with greater value for clients. Julián Povedano says that *El Español* often uses the design and technology team when it comes to developing special content for brands.

Figure 5. *Microsite with immersive experience by Condé Nast Creative Studio for Loewe*
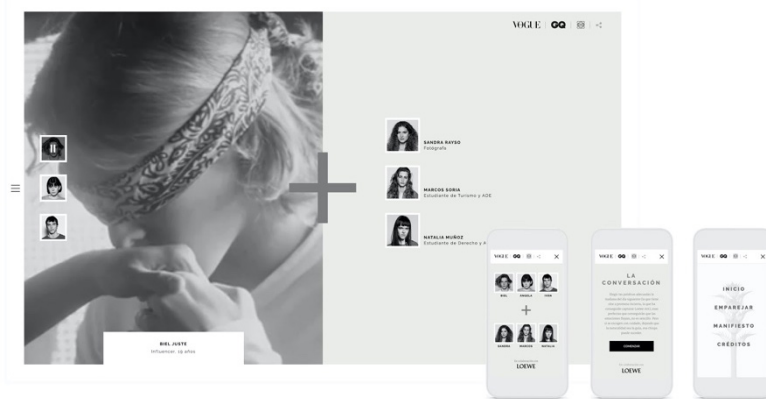
The creation of content platforms for brands is one of the most frequently demanded projects and it is a clear example of how the media have expanded their offer, as this type of assignment requires a series of processes ranging from the development and design of the content, to the creation of the container and development of the functionality of the website.

The importance of video at this new stage is crucial in order to understand the phenomenon of branded content generation and the new role of media outlets with brands. Ana Multigner makes it clear:

> "All clients want video. In the past year it has been spectacular. Video is fundamental for our type of client because it allows you to have different elements for different channels. Video is at the heart of generating other formats for networks: to make a teaser, a small piece on Instagram or something longer on YouTube. We are on many channels, so in the end a video allows you to have a broader reach strategy. If you're looking for reach and engagement, do video" (Interview 18/12/2019).

The media have begun to market a very ambitious type of product associated with a series of services, particularly those focused on the world of fashion or lifestyle, as the creative director of *¡Hola!*, Gema Jiménez, tells us:

> "We are selling more and more 360° actions, especially with audiovisual production. In a magazine like this, a fashion and production person is essential, because fashion productions are tedious, long and heavy. There are negotiations with representatives, with the teams of makeup artists, the hairdressers... We are talking about productions with teams of 20 people. One of the assets we have in here is that we have the audiovisual structure. That's one of the advantages brands see. You don't have to outsource anything" (Interview 18/12/2019).

The part involving creativity and content production requires the largest number of different types of staff, as well as the most resources invested. This commitment to provide a comprehensive response to

projects carried out with brands is a declaration of intent by the media, which are bidding to provide services traditionally reserved for agencies and production companies.

3.3.3. Distribution and analysis

Because of the many different channels, hyper-segmented audiences and non-captive consumers, it is important to have complex content distribution strategies. Once again, the incorporation of specialist staff has helped build up a great deal of knowledge about publication techniques in complex areas like social media (Figures 3 and 4). These departments also tend to use the full potential of the group's various titles so it is essential to master distribution, as Jorge Madrid confirms:

> "When a client hires us to create a campaign, they hire us to offer them a good idea, but also a good distribution strategy, which is usually associated with social media. That's why we work with traffickers" (Interview 9/07/2020).

Figure 3 and 4 *Playground Magazine Native Advertising for Nescafé and Xiaomi on Facebook*
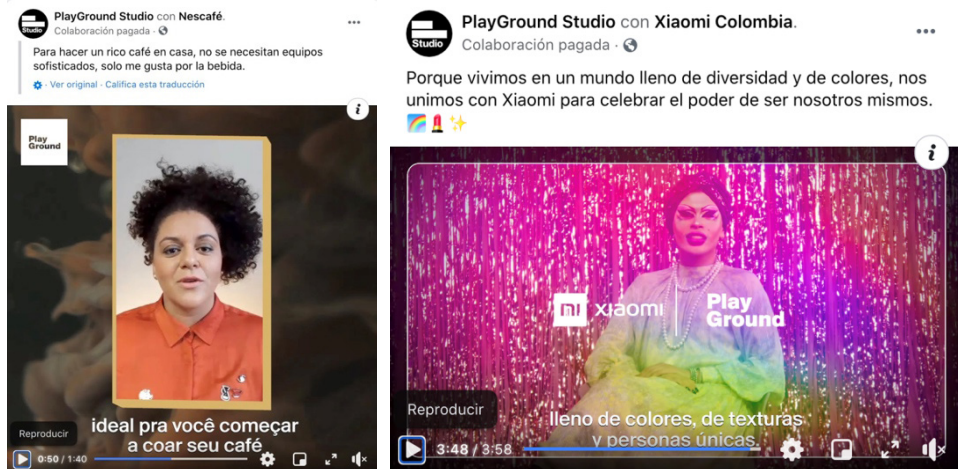
The audience strategist helps the content manager get the most out of the content across all platforms, distributes it and makes it comply with the platforms' rules and works on a traffic strategy to help expand the reach of the content. All this improves the effectiveness of native advertising. This knowledge also becomes an important asset when agency services are provided to third parties – in other words, when advice is given to brands on how to run their own social media accounts, as Davit Miró tells us:

> "I don't see how advertising agencies can have the knowledge of the current distribution platforms and audiences – that deep knowledge which comes from A/B testing that we have thanks to the media outlet. That expertise really makes us stand out" (Interview 13/10/2019).

As a result, some of the biggest brands in Spain have hired Playground Studio so they can transfer all that knowledge into their channels.

Another essential aspect linked to distribution is the constant measurement by analytics managers. In many cases, this real-time monitoring makes it possible to completely rethink the creativity or the publishing strategy in order to meet the targets set.

Once the campaign is over, the data manager analyses the data and draws conclusions that are offered to the brands, as clients have begun to demand analysis and traceability of their actions. Closing projects with a detailed report of the main metrics and drawing the relevant conclusions is therefore an essential part of the service.

Data collection by analytics departments has given rise to a series of products and services using content creation which are proving to be a very important revenue source for Spanish media, as Leyre Rodríguez explains:

> "With the data analytics team, we started selling branded content projects including a big data project, either because we collect data that we then use for impact or because we share it" (Interview 10/12/2019).

And, as several of the interviewees told us, all customers want products based on big data. The sale of clusters of highly qualified cookies, through DMPs (Data Management Platforms), is in great demand. The search for an increasingly qualitative impact by brands has made audience segmentation based on browsing patterns a common service. An example of this commitment by the media to monetising data is the Wemass audience marketing platform, the result of the association of major media groups such as Vocento, the Godó group and the Prisa group. This offers the opportunity to impact interest groups created from multiple quality user profiles by combining data from all the sites that are part of the project.

Table 1. Catalogue of services offered to brands

SERVICES

Consulting and strategy phase	Digital audit Benchmarking Market surveys Search strategies (SEO/SEM) Communication strategies Content strategies
Creativity and production phase	Creative management Copywriting Art management Graphic design and layout Infographics and animation UX/UI design Front-end web development Photographic and audiovisual production Production, DoP, location, props, styling Hiring celebrities and influencers
Distribution and analysis phase	Social media strategies Social media management Real-time tracking and monitoring Drawing up reports Social listening Audience segmentation Browsing panels

Source: Self-created based on the results obtained from the interviews
and the analysis of the sample websites.

3.4. Projects developed with brands

Two quite different lines of work can be seen in the types of assignments and projects usually carried out in branded content departments: one with a tactical approach and the other more strategic. Some professionals say they feel comfortable in both areas, but the vast majority are committed to long-term strategies as the paradigm of successful branded content.

3.4.1. One-offs for a tactical approach

One of the main motivations for brands is the need to generate notoriety as products are launched. Their targets are focused on conversion and the response tends to be more tactical and short-term actions, often aimed at e-commerce. As Gema Jiménez tells us:

> "Brands sometimes have very specific needs, which may be marked by a highly seasonal launch campaign in the summer or at Christmas, and we help expand their reach with our content" (Interview 18/12/2019).

Marcus Hurst, of Yorokobu, tells us that the way to provide support from his media outlet is to generate a content framework that makes it possible to talk about the product, but with a cultural component that is the result of research and is much more like journalism. This is very different from the kind of work an advertising agency would do.

In some media, this type of project tends to be the dominant trend and their creative managers lament the fact that they do not receive more long-term projects. Some branded content departments even admit that they do not accept this type of one-off assignment. Instead, clients are referred directly to

the advertising sales department so they can work directly with the editorial section. According to them, this type of project will tend to disappear.

3.4.2. "Always on" for a strategic approach

At the other end of the scale, there are the projects known as "always on", which correspond to a much more ambitious approach. This focuses on brand building, sometimes strengthening the brand's reputation due to a point of weakness, sometimes seeking a repositioning, and often trying to improve its strength in a particular territory, as Alberto Guzmán explains.

According to Alejandro Teodoro:

> "We are increasingly moving towards medium- or long-term projects – long-term projects that really require big investments, big productions and cross-functional teams working specifically on them. All groups have to move towards these big projects and be able to take branded content to the level it deserves" (Interview 10/07/2020).

According to Teodoro, branded content is not the right formula for selling more, but rather for positioning and transmitting values, as it works on intangible factors that improve reputations. As a result, companies' communication departments are increasingly interested in this product.

Another media outlet with a very similar view is Playground Magazine, Davit Miró highlights the fact that it specialises in content focused on creating engagement and not so much on conversion, pointing out that what his team is good at is creating audiences and keeping them stimulated. The services offered consist of providing the content brands need to publish periodically on their social networks. Publication follows a long-term plan that takes the form of a schedule set out on a calendar. The aim is to master the different formats so the content creation process is streamlined and can be resolved with simple production.

The greatest exponent of this type of long-term agreement can be found at Webedia Publishing, specifically in its specialised technology media outlet, Xataka. As can be seen on the outlet's home page, there is a specific section entitled "Partners", which is intended to house the content created for brands – a repository where the different publications created for the brand can be accumulated. Alex Ferrero refers to these spaces as "corners":

> "Brands increasingly want long-term actions – to buy a space within the media outlet where they can talk about their stuff. We make a 12-month plan and give them a section with their look and feel, all properly optimised with regularly posted content" (Interview 20/11/2019).

4. Discussion and conclusions

4.1. An emerging phenomenon

We can say that the creation of these branded content departments is an emerging phenomenon. The oldest one began in 2009 with the founding of *Yorokobu* magazine and the most recent is the department at *¡Hola!, which* is only a few months old. The emergence of these departments is due to the media's need to channel content creation requests from brands. This type of product used to be created in the newsroom itself, but as projects evolved and distribution strategies became more complex, it was decided to create specialised and professionalised structures.

Another key element that can help us understand the dimension of this phenomenon is its exponential growth, as we have seen in most of the departments analysed, which are constantly incorporating new profiles to cope with the strong demand.

4.2. New publishing products and terminology use

From these interviews, we can also determine that the trend is the rise in native advertising as one of the most frequently demanded editorial products, specifically in the form of branded or native content. Another very popular product, although it is by no means new, is still the advertorial. In fact, many assignments initially seek to develop content with the characteristics of native advertising, focusing on providing relevant content to meet an audience need rather than on the brand, but as the project progresses, the brand ends up prioritising its presence. This downgrades the editorial value of the content, which becomes an advertorial and ends up labelled as such.

Some of the professionals interviewed, such as Fedra Valderrey and Alejandro Teodoro, warn that the volume of advertorials created is still greater than native advertising, as brands find it difficult to stay in the background even though the results of engagement metrics obtained with native advertising

are much higher than those for advertorials. Media professionals call on clients to take notice of these figures. The deep knowledge they have and have generated over the years is the key to connecting users, allowing them to build and manage large audiences.

As for the epistemological question, several professionals detected a tendency to make inappropriate use of the term native advertising, using it to refer to content focusing on products. Professionals who wrongly use the term native advertising to refer to advertorials do so from a negative point of you, as they consider this to be content with little editorial value and an excessive commercial component. The term is also used to refer to promotional content that appears as related articles within a media outlet but which are actually hosted on third-party platforms.

Interestingly, "native advertising", which is the term that best defines the new editorial product offered by the media, tends to be either used incorrectly or omitted. Some of those interviewed even admitted that they have given up using the term altogether because they believe the market is not sufficiently mature for it and it can cause confusion among customers.

We find that the most widespread term used by professionals to refer to the content created for brands in the media is branded content. If we start from the premise that it is a non-advertising content intended to be relevant to the audience, whether informing, educating or entertaining them, it could be said that it partly meets the definition, and that it would actually be more accurate to use the term native advertising, which would not be misused in this context.

Thus, when the branded content department of a media outlet creates content for a brand that is published on that outlet and therefore follows its editorial line, we would be talking about native advertising. Whereas, if that same department creates content that is published on a brand's channels and therefore adopts the voice of that brand, we would be talking about branded content.

4.3. Expertise in content creation for brands

As we have seen when analysing the cases of Condé Nast, Webedia, Playground and Yorokobu, this differentiation is crucial to understanding the particular features of the media which, as well as offering native advertising, are incorporating digital agency functions with branded content creation services into their departments.

Concerning this duality that gives rise to business models with parallel but differentiated trajectories, it is curious to observe that the big media groups are focusing exclusively on offering brands the creation of content designed to be distributed in the group's different titles, thereby capitalising on the large audiences they have. With the exception of the PRISA group, which does have an agency called Factoría that produces content for third parties, we have no evidence that the other major groups are working in this direction. Some of the professionals interviewed are reluctant to do this because they cannot see that it has a place within the current business mindset and culture, or because the profit margins are infinitely lower than those for native advertising, while others see an opportunity for growth in this direction and believe that it is only a matter of time before it happens. Curiously, the digital native or niche media seem to be the most willing to explore this avenue, if they have not already done so, offering a series of services more typical of a digital advertising agency than conventional media.

4.4. Professionalisation, structure and agency services

To respond to these new needs, the departments responsible for business have had to undergo a major transformation. The new editorial product offered to brands is much more complex than the actions that could be carried out in the past, as it includes omnichannel strategies, transmedia narratives, business analysis and social media strategy. Considering that in many cases a range of services as broad as those offered by an advertising agency specialising in digital marketing is already on offer it is easy to understand the proliferation of branded content departments with their diverse profiles including everything from writers to audiovisual producers, SEO experts, e-commerce and data analysts.

On the other hand, the media forced into digital transformation by the moment of disruption more than ten years ago, have developed editorial intelligence that is great demand and this has given them the opportunity to monetise content via new business models. In many cases, branded content departments or agencies are becoming an essential source of revenue for them. At a time when many editorial projects are still struggling to find the formula to guarantee their survival, the growth in demand for this type of products and services is a hopeful trend for many of them.

4.5. The added value of the product created in the media

All indications are that this phenomenon will continue to grow. The value offered is considerable:

1. Capacity to reach large audiences that help to amplify messages, or segmentation possibilities with highly qualitative audiences.

2. Reputation and credibility transferred from the media to the brand. It is very important to be associated with specialised media that are important in certain fields and have strong brands.

3. Editorial intelligence that translates into a deep understanding of audiences, as well as which formats and types of content are working best. The media outlet itself serves as an R&D test bed.

4. Possibility of linking to current events.

5. Simplification of processes. A single contact person covers all the brand's needs. Everything from strategic consultancy, to creative proposals, production, distribution and reporting of results.

6. Content-derived products based on big data, which allow for the subsequent development of highly personalised activations.

4.6. Product knowledge, process improvement and maturity of the industry

Although the new scenario is promising, it requires both parties to improve their processes and their understanding of the products offered, especially native advertising. Some professionals who belong to international publishing groups observe that, in other countries, the market is more mature and the product is better understood. They conclude that in Spain there is a need for professionalisation and for the establishment of rules of the game.

The interviewees were not generally in favour of using branded content as a tactical action seeking direct conversion into sales, as this usually gives poor results in more qualitative metrics such as dwell time, and also generates a negative feeling among reader, which does not help anyone. Its function should be aimed at branding and trying to dominate territories related to the brand in terms of values and positioning.

The "always on" format is the most interesting formula: collaboration agreements lasting up to a year are concluded, which means more strategic projects can be developed. A series of pieces of content is generated around an idea and long-term planning is carried out with the teams set up for the project. The media outlet supports the brand and establishes dynamics very similar to those used by the outlet itself to create audiences. It seems that increasing numbers of clients are asking for strategies with continuity, and this is perhaps one of the most important indicators that the approach is on the way becoming fully established.

It seems clear that this is a new paradigm in the advertising industry, with a disruptive scenario in terms of the relationship between brands and the media, as the latter have always been the recipients of advertising, but they have never before intervened in it. This is changing the advertising business in a way that in some cases is being seen as interference by other traditional players, such as creative agencies or media centres. The speed with which the digital ecosystem is changing means we will have to continue to observe and analyse in detail the development of an emerging phenomenon that is becoming strongly established and promises good prospects for the future.

5. Acknowledgement

6. Bibliographical references

[1] Aguilera-Moyano J., Baños-González, M. y Ramírez-Perdiguero J. (2015). Branded entertainment: los contenidos de entretenimiento como herramienta de comunicación de marketing. Un estudio de su situación actual en España. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social,* 70, 519-538. https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2015-1057

[2] Álvarez-Gayou J. (2003). *Cómo hacer una investigación cualitativa, fundamentos y metodología.* Ecuador: Paidós.

[3] Apostol N. (2020). What Is Known About Native Advertising in Editorial Contexts? En E. Abrudan; D. Baladan y I. Iancu (Eds.), *Journal of Media Research*, *vol. 13 Issue 2* (pp. 59-81). Babes-Bolyai University.

[4] Casero-Ripollés, A. (2010). Prensa en Internet: nuevos modelos de negocio en el escenario de la convergencia. *El profesional de la información*, 19 (6), 595-601 https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2010.nov.05

[5] Casero Ripollés, A. (2014). La pérdida de valor de la información periodística: causas y consecuencias. *Anuario ThinkEPI*, 8(1), 256-259. http://hdl.handle.net/10234/124523

[6] Castelló-Martínez, A. (2018). La dimensión creativa del concepto de *insight* aplicado a la publicidad. Empatizando con el target de la comunicación persuasiva. En F. García García; V. Tur-Viñes; I. Arroyo Almaraz y L. Rodrigo Martín (Eds.). *Creatividad en publicidad. Del impacto al comparto* (pp. 83-114). Madrid: Dykinson.

[7] Del Pino-Romero, C. y Castelló-Martínez, A. (2015). La comunicación publicitaria se pone de moda: branded content y fashion films. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación*, *vol.* 6(1), 105-128. http://mediterranea-comunicacion.org/. DOI 10.14198/MEDCOM2015.6.1.07.

[8] Ferrer Conill, R. (2016). Camouflaging Church as State. *Journalism Studies,* 17 (7), 904-914. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1165138

[9] Gaitán Moya, J. y Piñuel Raigada, J. (1998). *Técnicas de investigación en comunicación social, elaboración y registro de datos*. Editorial Síntesis.

[10] Giraldo-Luque, S. y Fernández-Rovira, C. (2020). Redes sociales y consumo digital en jóvenes universitarios: economía de la atención y oligopolios de la comunicación en el siglo XXI. *Profesional de la información*, 29(5). https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.sep.28

[11] Interactive Advertising Bureau (2019). *Libro blanco. Branded content y publicidad nativa*. https://iabspain.es/estudio/libro-blanco-de-branded-content-y-publicidad-nativa/

[12] Jenkins, H. (2008). *Convergence Culture: La cultura de la convergencia de los medios de comunicación*. Paidós Ibérica.

[13] Jenkins, H., Ford, S. y Green, J. (2013). *Spreadable media: creating value and meaning in a networked culture*. Nueva York: U Press.

[14] Lafuente Ibáñez, C. y Marín Egoscozábal, A. (2008). Metodologías de la investigación en las ciencias sociales: Fases, fuentes y selección de técnicas. *Revista Escuela De Administración De Negocios*, 64, 5-18. https://doi.org/10.21158/01208160.n64.2008.450

[15] Martínez-Sáez, J. y García-Cubell, R. (2018), Rock&Love, rebeldía y honestidad como claves del éxito de las marcas. En F. García García; V. Tur-Viñes; I. Arroyo Almaraz y L. Rodrigo Martín (Eds.). *Creatividad en publicidad. Del impacto al comparto* (pp. 311-336). Madrid: Dykinson.

[16] Miotto, G. y Payne, G. (2019). Branded content: una nueva apuesta para el New York Times. *adComunica. Revista Científica de Estrategias, Tendencias e Innovación en Comunicación*, 17, 23-39. http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/2174-0992.2019.17.3

[17] Native Advertising Institute (2020). The ultimate native ads guide. https://bit.ly/3v1THjF

[18] Papí-Gálvez, N. (2015). Nuevos medios y empresas innovadoras. El caso de las agencias de medios. *El profesional de la información*, 24(3), 301-309. https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2015.may.10

[19] Regueira Mourente, F. (2012). *El contenido como herramienta eficaz de comunicación de marca. Análisis teórico y empírico*. Tesis doctoral, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. http://hdl.handle.net/10115/11415

[20] Rodríguez-Ferrándiz, R. (2017). [Reseña] Branded content infantil [reseña]. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación/Mediterranean Journal of Communication*, *8*(1), 203-205.

[21] Scolari, C. (2013). *Narrativas transmedia: cuando todos los medios cuentan*. Madrid: Grupo Planeta.

[22] Selva-Ruiz, D. y Caro-Castaño, L. (2016). Uso de datos en creatividad publicitaria: el caso de Art, Copy & Code de Google. *El profesional de la información*, 25(4), 642-651. https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2016.jul.14

[23] Sirrah, A. (2019). Guide to Native Advertising. https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/native-ads.php

[24] Soler, P. (2011). La investigación cualitativa. Un enfoque integrador. En L. Vilches (Coord.), *La investigación en comunicación. Métodos y técnicas de la era digital* (p. 191). Barcelona: Gedisa Editorial.

[25] Stalman, A. (2014). *Brandoffon: El Branding del futuro*. Madrid: Grupo Planeta.

[26] Trillo-Domínguez, M. y Alberich-Pascual, J. (2020). Análisis y tipificación de formatos emergentes en el ciberperiodismo español: de la adaptación multimedia a la disrupción transmedia. *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico* 26(1), 652-668. https://doi.org/10.5209/esmp.67317

[27] Valero-Pastor, J. y González-Alba, J. (2018). Las startups periodísticas como ejemplos de innovación en el mercado mediático español. Estudio de casos. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social,* 73, 556-582. https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2018-1269

[28] Vilches, L. (Coord.) (2011). *La investigación en comunicación. Métodos y técnicas en la era digital*. Barcelona: Gedisa Editorial.

[29] Villafañe, J.; Ortiz-de-Guinea-Ayala, Y. y Martín-Sáez, J. (2020). Reputación de los medios de comunicación españoles. *Profesional de la información*, 29(4). *https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.jul.07*

[30] Website de Godo Strategies. https://www.godostrategies.com/proyectos/branded-content/

[31] Website de Condé Nast Creative Studio. http://www.condenaststories.es/adn/

[32] Website de EC Brands Studio. https://brands.elconfidencial.com

[33] Wimmer, R. y Dominick, J. (2016). *La investigación científica de los medios de comunicación*. Barcelona: Colección Bosch Comunicación, Editorial Bosch.

[34] Wojdynski, B. W. y Golan, G. J. (2016). Native advertising and the future of mass communication. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60 (12), 1403-1407. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764216660134

[35] Zamith, F.; Mañas-Viniegra, L. y Núñez-Gómez, P. (2021). Cognitive Perception of Native Advertising in the Spanish and Portuguese Digital Press, Digital Journalism. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1919536

Dr. Patricia DELPONTI
Universidad de La Laguna. Spain. adelpont@ull.edu.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9694-867X

Dr. Almudena BARRIENTOS-BÁEZ
Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Spain. almbarri@ucm.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9913-3353

Dr. David CALDEVILLA-DOMÍNGUEZ
Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Spain. davidcaldevilla@ccinf.ucm.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9850-1350

City Branding: communication and marketing strategy for an island urban policy

Branding en ciudades turísticas: nuevas formas de comunicación y marketing para la política urbana de una isla

Abstract

Nowadays, in our so-called "Information Society", no one can doubt that marketing and communication within a tourist city are crucial for its existence and development. Due to this, city branding research has gained interest in international literature in recent years. The current project focuses on the implementation of a place-branding competitive strategy in the case of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, a medium-sized island capital city, to explore the core mechanism of this phenomenon, from an applied perspective and as a result of the experience gained in several knowledge transfer projects led by the authors. More specifically, this research sought to analyze the current conditions prevailing in the capital of a peripheral island together with possible collaborations between actors. Extended bibliographical research in city branding, as well as successful case studies of other places, led to the formation of the panel discussion. Qualitative research, using in-depth interviews with local stakeholders, public administration opinion leaders and private entrepreneurs, was also carried out. The findings suggest that organizing broad stakeholder participation in the branding process on the site is an inescapable necessity in times of globalization and promoting the territory on the basis of that brand is a major component.

Resumen

El presente proyecto se centra en la implementación de una estrategia competitiva de marca para Santa Cruz de Tenerife, una capital insular de tamaño medio para explorar el mecanismo central de este fenómeno, desde una perspectiva aplicada y como resultado de la experiencia adquirida en varios proyectos de transferencia de conocimiento liderados por los autores. El objetivo es analizar las condiciones actuales que prevalecen en la capital de una isla periférica junto con las posibles colaboraciones entre los interesados. La profunda revisión bibliográfica sobre la marca de la ciudad, así como los estudios de casos exitosos de otros lugares, llevaron a la formación del panel de discusión. También se lleva a cabo una investigación cualitativa, utilizando entrevistas en profundidad con actores locales, líderes de opinión de la administración pública y empresarios privados. Las conclusiones sugieren que gestionar una gran participación en el proceso de creación de marca de un destino es una necesidad imprescindible en tiempos de globalización.

1. Introduction

The collapse of boundaries between institutions and the necessity of collaborative innovation to address current and future challenges demand a profession focused on innovative manners that would improve relationships with publics, and guide the social conversation. Traditionally, functional, postmodernist and critical approaches in PR/communication literature are aiming to find responses to the challenges. This track aims to fulfill a research agenda that shows new trends: how collaborative networks are built with a wide range of stakeholders, how communication improves the organizational decision-making process; what new leadership roles of professionals are being enacted; or what key indicators are being put into practice for the constituent communication organizations.

Nowadays, in our so-called "Information Society", no one can doubt that marketing and communication within a touristic city is crucial for its existence and development as places of all kinds can benefit from implementing coherent image and reputation strategies. In addition, brands direct their strategic and communicative efforts towards the search of a consumer more and more elusive, demanding and with a greater willingness to participate (Fernández-Gómez and Gordillo-Rodríguez, 2015). Due to this, city branding research has gained more interest in international academic literature and public authorities in recent years. Cities throughout Europe are paying more attention than ever to branding by using modern marketing tools and including branding strategies in their decisions in order to pursuit wider urban management goals. Indeed, there is intense competition between cities (Kavaratzis, 2011; Warnaby, 2009) that prompts local policy makers to explore new ways to combine economic development with sustainable urban transformation, in order to reduce the growing gap between cities the richest and the most disadvantaged existing inhabitants in these cities. According to Martínez-Sala and Campillo-Alhama (2018), branding is based on being a communicative model resulting from a consumer who has taken an active role in the communication process with brands.

Many decision-makers have considered city branding as a key strategy to guide their cities' transformation process, because this brings many positive changes, especially in terms of quality of life and economic prosperity. However, controversies are also a current challenge that they have to face by involving local stakeholders in the process to balance branding versus marketing; places versus products; policy versus politics; and theory versus practice (Hospers, 2020).

The massification of media advertising, the proliferation of new technological tools for communication and the voracious competition for citizen attention are some of the circumstances that have caused a significant change in the communication landscape. Such substantive modifications affect the way to conceive strategic management of public relations and corporate communication in business. Today's PR reality requires a professional implementation of various actions based on innovative tactics which digital operation and effectiveness are not entirely legitimate, but need an urgent application in order to remain inside the global stage (Delponti, 2016). Another part of the complexity of city branding is the diverse target audience to work with and this is a challenge that is being discussed in a considerably proportion of city branding literature.

The current digitization process is also increasing interest in developed countries as it brings a revolution in the ways of doing, thinking and promoting places. This should be an incentive for academics to analyze this new approach to city branding. However, online branding studies are still descriptive as they explore city councils websites and mostly based on qualitative analysis of making campaigns. Cities are extremely competitive in trying to attract tourists, investors, and a more educated workforce and city branding is a useful tool to gain a competitive advantage. Experts insist that places should prove their uniqueness in order to promote and achieve various targets and that is the reason why the case study method is widely used to comprehend the state of this complex matter.

It is a fact that to gain popularity, it is important to keep public's appreciation and loyalty. Nevertheless, to convey a good image value within a context of global economic crisis and environmental collapse and totally dominated by social media, developing integral strategies regarding marketing, PR, and reputation analysis, is required. Likewise, offering different and special contents to satisfy the demands and needs of residents is also important, although, this is sometimes a little bit idealistic. Beside this, respecting the experience that public already has, as a digital information consumer is definitely the essential point.

The activity of promoting, positioning and managing the reputation is something that private companies have been doing for a long time and it has been in this private sphere where creation, development and brand management and reputation have emerged (Apolo *et al.*, 2017). At the local level, people create associations to the city brand and value these associations in the same way.

This paper focuses on a specific case of study: the implementation of a place branding competitive strategy in the case of Santa Cruz de Tenerife. We assume that public communication in local contexts

stand as a powerful tool in government's hands which allow explaining, justifying and, consequently, legitimizing the political decisions assumed in each governmental period. More specifically, the aim is to identify and analyze the current conditions prevailing in the island's capital city along with possible collaborations between stakeholders.

In this context, social networks and new forms of unconventional media play a starring role in changing the communication paradigm of local institutions. In fact, interest is growing due to the diminishing effectiveness of traditional media strategies, urban marketing or advertising. This is especially the case when the objective is to avoid confusion between the branding of the city and the simple creation of a visual territory. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), World Tourism grew by 5 % in 2018, reaching 1,400 million euros travelers two years earlier than expected.

The long-term estimate published in 2010 predicted 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals by 2020 however the strong economic growth, the more affordable air travel, technological changes, new business models and the simplification of visa's processing have accelerated growth in recent years.

Within this context of increasing tourist movement and urban process, city branding literature is experiencing a proportional growing interest within scholars and practitioners that find out in the tourism field, the instrument to manage and communicate the city's competitive advantages. Meanwhile, it is clearly observed that the concept of city, urban and place branding are used interchangeably and due to that academics are making efforts to clarify the terms. Hence, city branding is a complex phenomenon and a coherent consensus among scholars who keep theoretical distinctions between different terms according to their usage, is needed.

In the last decade, more and more public administrations, especially city councils, are showing interest in deploying this type of process not only with promotional intentions, but also as the first option for economic promotion and local development. This aspect becomes essential in order not to limit the extraordinary possibilities that the effective deployment of a brand gives to a territory (De-San-Eugenio and Ginesta, 2020).

"The people of Amsterdam are Amsterdam". The brand conveys both the diversity of people who live there, such as pride, trust, choice and support from the citizens themselves (Kavaratzis, 2011). Moreover, the city brand will be the name of the city, in addition to the logo (if they exist), associated with a group of attributes that, perceived by the target audience, will cause positive or negative reactions. It's been frequently observed that if a city treats the brand as a mere name, it then fails in the strategy, so the challenge of brand name is to create a series of deep positive associations that reflect its promise and this is the one of the focuses of city brand literature.

One of the most recent and ample contributions is the summary made by Oguztimur and Akturan (2015) that, even assuming the limitation of analyzing only international publications, the study generated several conclusions. In fact, it explores the articles published between, 1988-2014 in scholarly journals using, inductive methods of thematic analysis. The usage of secondary sources such as documents, statistics and other researches are also popular methods for data collection and the outcome of these investigations are spread in conceptual papers. Interviews in depth are used as well, especially in qualitative studies concerning specific experiences or case studies.

The main stream states that city branding can be classified under four research areas: (1) City branding concept, processes and measurement; (2) branding strategies; (3) social urbanism and (4) branding culture and tourism. For these delimited extents on city branding concept and due to its interdisciplinary character, it is possible to make two different approaches: marketing oriented and planning oriented. The first one is severely criticized by academics that consider this slant as superficial and far from reality. These two distinct approaches and the short-term promotion-oriented practices of urban policy-makers are the main reasons for not generating a robust theory in city branding literature. Therefore, ¨a more holistic viewpoint, combining marketing and planning-oriented approaches, is needed¨ (Oguztimur and Akturan, 2015: 368).

Following this path, recent studies (Kavaratzis) make an interesting reflection about transferring marketing knowledge to the operational environment of cities and develop a theoretical frame studying the fluencies from city marketing to city branding. According to him the background in which marketing became accessible to city administrators was provided by the rise of what he calls 'entrepreneurial city', and the marketing of places has been one of the defining features of the entrepreneurial modes of urban governance that have come to prominence since the 1970s. This is the case of Helsinki, the capital of Finland, which shows with its new brand concept that city branding and urban entrepreneurialism can be part of the same concept by bringing together in the related marketing strategy "different actors to rethink urban governance in terms of experimentation and empowerment of the self" (Jokela, 2020: 2033). This is the model that we expect while we revise in Santa Cruz City.

City branding provides the basis for developing policy to pursue economic development and, following Kavaratzis perspective; it serves as a conduit for city residents to identify with their city. In this sense, the relevance and the need for a framework describing and clarifying the processes involved in city branding are equally strong for two reasons, a) facing increasing competition for resources, investment and tourism and b) for addressing urgent social issues like social exclusion and cultural diversity. The framework focuses on the use of city branding and its potential effects on city residents and the way residents associate with and experience their city (2004, p. 58). Likewise, the complexity of urban development shows that there are so many overpowering factors that can reduce hopes of branding expectative, unless it is an effective policy instrument with a lot of potential for cities (Hospers, 2020). Actually, there are successful examples like the case of Turin where deepening the role played by urban branding policies, helped to modify its former image of an industrial city, by not only promoting the city image but also in refusing some particular urban representations (Mehan, 2017).

On the other hand, Braun (2012) identify eight factors that include city resident's perspective, as they believe that it would help marketing professionals to avoid mistakes previously made with the introduction of city marketing. The first four factors are governance issues relating to shaping the city brand within the broader political framework of the city to reinforce the importance of the city brand in relation to traditional city policies. At the same time, the strategic branding choices of city marketers could have a direct impact on the political decision-making process as well. The last four factors are intrinsically linked to the concept and application of branding itself. Hence, city branding requires the combination of marketing excellence with the sensitivity of operating in a political environment (Braun, 2012: 257).

Andrea Insch shares with Kavaratzis the focus on residents and states in Keith Dinnie's book called City branding that« apart from the economic advantages of urban concentration, cities offer their residents many social and emotional benefits, including opportunities to share information, form close social bonds, and to engage in a range of activities matching their interests » Furthermore, she insists, that economic, social, cultural and environmental vibrancy of a city lie in the level of satisfaction of their residents where more satisfaction will result in a lower risk of disenchantment and downward spiral (Insch, 2011: 9).

At this point, the most challenging issue of city branding is to communicate with the multiple stakeholders in a relevant, consistent and coherent way. Cities that try to capture their complexity in a single brand promise, often fail and the risk of becoming vague, weak, or even meaningless is high (Insch, 2011: 11).

Since residents are the essence of the community it is clear that they should be involved in determining the city's long-term economic, social and environmental direction. In fact, the majority of academics are convinced that the effectiveness of city brands depends on the support and commitment of local residents, local business operators and community groups. At the same time, it is also crucial to engage potential residents who self-identify with the city and specifically those stakeholders that naturally defend the brand such as city authorities, tourism agencies and chambers of commerce, in developing and implementing the strategy as part of the co-creative process (Insch, 2011).

On the other hand, and regarding social participation, it is also important to remark that according to the article 105.b) of the Spanish Constitution and several Spanish laws, everyone has the right to access public information. All content or documents, regardless of the format, held by any town hall and those that have been prepared or acquired as such, are considered public information.

Many authors agree that articulating a shared vision for the city's future is the starting point for crafting the city brand strategy because if they are developed behind closed doors and do not reach out to the required range of stakeholders, the strategy will fail. Therefore, the current discussions lie on the participation of citizens in governance processes as highlighted in the urban governance works. Due to this, recent literature examines the different roles that residents play in the formation and communication of place brands and explores the implications for place brand management. In fact, "residents are largely neglected by place branding practice and their priorities are often misunderstood, even though they are not passive beneficiaries but are active partners and co-producers of public goods, services and policies" (Braun *et al.*, 2013).

Another line of study asserts that branding a city through culture, history, events and entertainment are some of the increasingly growing trends in this field. Culture in the form of cultural facilities and events, architecture and urban history plays an important role in forming and sharpening the city image, thus becomes a strategic tool for the ones who are benefiting from the positive reflections of a city brand (Kavaratzis, 2004; Lucarelli and Berg, 2011). For instance, the case of Barcelona with a very successful cultural branding strategy: the public activity around the film *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2007) and the association between the film maker's prestige, Woody Allen and Barcelona city. The film is presented as an example of "cinematic advertising", and public participation in its production was part of a

place branding strategy based on the cultural industry and urban heritage, particularly architectural modernism (Zamorano, 2020).

As we can see there are many and complex approaches in place or city branding research, and people know and understand the city through their own perceptions and those perceptions are processed through the image that the city offers them. Therefore, we suggest using a combination of methods to try to reveal the brand elements that reside in an inhabitant's mind.

2. Methodology

In this article we study the importance that Santa Cruz de Tenerife City council gives to city brand, PR strategies and city reputation building as a new field to develop, by analyzing its tactics, ways of doing and communication channels management to place the city brand.

In order to address the aspects mentioned above about the value of the brand for cities and places, this scientific contribution presents the results of a case study based on content analysis and an inductive approach of theme identification via thematic analysis, discussed from an applied perspective and as a result of the experience gained from several knowledge transfer projects led by the authors. This is because we agree with Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) which states that scientific truth also results from the act of observation and emerging consensus in a community of observers in accordance with the sense that they give to their observation.

In this understanding process and due to the complex phenomenon studied, several and different nature aspects converge. Hence, to explain those issues that have been poorly addressed and consequently, there are no substantial theories available, Glaser and Strauss proposed this theory as a way of approaching social reality in a different way. In opposition to the hypothetical-deductive approaches, Glaser and Strauss defined this theory as an "inductive approach in which immersion in the data serves as a starting point for the development of a theory about a phenomenon" (Guillemette, 2006: 33).

We started with a systematic review of the existing bibliography in the field of city branding published in the main scientific journals of Tourism and Communication. The transdisciplinary nature of the subject studied requires that researchers consider different perspectives and case studies from other cities to establish theoretical contributions and understand the evolution of the state of the question.

Qualitative research, using panel discussion and in depth interviews with local stakeholders, public administration opinion leaders and entrepreneurs in private sector was also carried out. In addition to the interviews, this investigation uses documents study in order to identify SWOT of The Heart of Tenerife slogan, as the city branding claim of Santa Cruz city.

The current project focuses on the implementation of a place branding competitive strategy in the case of Santa Cruz de Tenerife. More specifically, the aim of this research was to identify and analyze the current conditions prevailing in the island's capital city along with possible collaborations between stakeholders. Moreover, the objective is to asses these conditions and the efficient articulation of the cooperation between the parts involved.

In addition, we used deductive analysis developed on the basis of the researcher's theoretical interest and we compared contents of various interviews and observation episodes with the theoretical concepts resulting from the effort to identify the fundamental issues.

The process outlined intends to describe the full complexity of Santa Cruz branding, which stems to a great extent from the need to simultaneously address the needs of different stakeholders that were deeply interviewed.

3. Case Study: Santa Cruz de Tenerife's Town Hall

There has been much skepticism about Santa Cruz's policies towards place marking, as they have been criticized as an unrealistic or unintellectual attempt. Achieving an interdisciplinary process and not just marketing campaign has been a continuous challenge to Santa Cruz's authorities that have been responsible for the management of city brand since 2016. In fact, since the last two decades different city branding initiatives and concepts have been developed by city council, but most of them were political campaigns with limited stakeholders focus. This is probably the reason why very little attention has been dedicated to branding in Santa Cruz in Spanish academic literature, which is not surprising, given the city's limited experience in city branding.

3.1. Santa Cruz, capital of the island

Santa Cruz de Tenerife is the capital of the largest island of the Canary archipelago and is located in the northeast. The municipality covers an area of 150.56 square meters and has a population of 209.984 inhabitants. This population is distributed unevenly throughout the municipality due to the fact that a large area is constituted by the highland mountains of the Macizo de Anaga, where the density of population is very low because of the orographic difficulties to establish populated areas.

Before the Castilian conquerors arrived, the territory where the current city is found, was an area of wild vegetation, and belonged to the Menceyato (Canarian kingdom) of Anaga, ruled by the Mencey (Canarian king) Beneharo. The pre-Hispanic history of the city is characterized by the legacy of the Guanches (aboriginal inhabitants of the Canary Islands) and by some foreign expeditions that reached the coast. The Castilians arrived in 1494, establishing their base camp in Santa Cruz during the conquest of the island, which lasted until 1496, the year in which Tenerife was incorporated to the Crown of Castile.

A heterogeneous society began to form at the end of the fifteenth century, composed of soldiers, sailors, merchants and even Guanches. The first square and new defensive castles were built along the coast in the second half of the sixteenth century, as Santa Cruz inhabitants needed to defend themselves against frequent corsair and pirate attacks; including Berber, Gallic and English pirates.

The first expansion of Santa Cruz took place in the eighteenth century as a result of numerous factors. One of them was the new residence of the general, who moved from the city of La Laguna to the castle of San Cristobal. This change in the capital's location brought about a new administrative dimension. The growing population soon started to demand services and leisure areas.

The Twentieth century brought modernization and a demographic boom, allowing the city to extend its limits and become the great city that it is today. It also expanded geographically, resulting in ambiguous borders as the growth of urban agglomerations of neighboring municipalities lead to the formation of the metropolitan area of Tenerife; integrated today, in addition to Santa Cruz and La Laguna, by El Rosario and Tegueste. At the end of the twentieth century, these four municipalities accounted for more than half (52%) of the island's population, revealing the disproportionate demographic magnitude existent on the island. As the capital, the heart of the municipality of Santa Cruz has exerted a special attraction from a residential and economic point of view, always favored by the clear population gap that exists.

The repercussion that the decentralization of activities towards adjacent municipalities is having, and the strong tourist and economic development taking place in southwest areas of the island, have caused the moderation of the population's growth in the City of Santa Cruz.

3.2. Antecedents: challenges at branding Santa Cruz

As it can be seen, Santa Cruz was traditionally a commercial and administrative city that left the touristic profit to be developed by the north or the south of the island. In fact, the efforts to promote tourism were shyly made with some actions for internal target, by attending some local promotional events, fairs or meetings. Moreover, although hosting one of the world's most important Carnival fest, there was no accommodation platforms ready to receive tourists, except the 2 traditional trade hotels, the majority of international visitors use to stay in the south or the north of the island. Carnival is the most popular festivity in Santa Cruz and the most participative of those held on the Canary Islands. In 1980, it was declared "Fiesta of International Tourist Interest", and in 1987, it entered the Guinness World Record Book as the largest gathering of people in an outdoor plaza to attend a concert with more than 200.000 people.

Hosting large events like Carnival play a vital role not only in the regeneration of Santa Cruz city, but also in significantly contributing to its branding. This is because Carnival, as a mega international event, starts branding campaigns that help to position the brand. While some events attract only particular audiences, Santa Cruz Carnival fest joins the entire population of the city together with visitors and this attracts the national media´s attention.

On the other hand, Santa Cruz Film Commission (another public resource with touristic aims) has been developed to assist with film permits, locations, and it provides information on crew, equipment and support services for feature films, commercials, television, and still photography shootings. In addition to its permits and administrative management, Santa Cruz Film Commission, offers a diversity of locations, including majestic redwood forests, winding mountain roads, charming rustic towns, a historic narrow-gauge railroad at Roaring Camp Railroads, old Victorian neighborhoods, colorful seaside villages, the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, lush agricultural fields, dramatic coastal bluffs, and 29 miles of coastline, all within just a few hundred square miles. Santa Cruz Film Commission also assists production companies with a wide range of lodging and dining options for every budget.

3.3. Santa Cruz Master plan for tourism and city brand development

There are four necessary conditions to develop a city brand plan with a tourist vocation:

a) Differentiation. The element of local identity (values, environmental, landscape, history, culture, traditions, the sea and gastronomy).

b) Cooperation: harmony and coordination between the different agents that convey in Santa Cruz tourism sector.

c) Expertise: the competence of tourism agents to modern times, training and recycling.

d) Satisfaction: the quality of resources is not enough nowadays, it is necessary a step forward to innovation.

According to the ideas mentioned above, a tourism Master Plan should integrate in the same framework and within a consensual and orderly manner, the strategic operational plans of the most relevant entities and institutions in a unique and practical strategy that identify the role of each entity.

In Spain, Strategic Tourism Plans have imposed themselves as the administrative reference instruments for management territories that have tourism as their economic pillars. These plans, generally, have clear objectives, guidelines and actions that must be carried out within a specific schedule. In Santa Cruz's case a core group of businessmen and resident population, together with local administration, are committed to impulse tourism as an integrating economic activity within different productive model. This posture is framed in a difficult economic situation of public budgets containment and financial decrease in private sector, so the principles of austerity, efficiency and maximum added value are the most important elements to be considered.

The plan has as its main objective to act as a reference frame for tourism decision making, both in the public and private side of Santa Cruz city and due to that, it focuses on the competitive improvement of the tourist destination. A collaborative process has been opened, for its development, one that considers the city as an integral system involving all actors and sectors.

With the aim of tourism becoming the backbone of the socio-economy of Santa Cruz city, the strategic plan considers that exercising a leadership position and pushing inter sectorial integration is fundamental for success; as well as the creation of platforms to develop initiatives that improve resident's quality of life and tourist's experiences. To achieve this goal the plan outlines that the tourism system should be conceived as a lever for economic revitalization, architectural recovery, conservation and enhancement of existing goods and resources.

In this sense, the strategic plan promotes itself as the starting point of Santa Cruz City Brand by defining the following aims:

☐ To start a collaborative-open process among all actors of the island's capital city, with an active and constant reflection approach which allows Santa Cruz to position itself as a solid tourist destination in the coming two years.

☐ To provide an insular-urban tourism reference model in the Atlantic that helps to increase accommodation rates in the city.

☐ To improve local population's quality of life by extending and making residents aware of the importance of tourism and its real benefits.

At the same time, the strategic plan also determines key lines for city development

• Santa Cruz: being Tenerife's central node of transportation and communications.

- Mobility and accessibility between city center and neighborhoods from the city
- Opening the city to the sea
- Supporting port business being compatible with opening the city to the sea

• Commercial and services

- Updating sales and trade activities
- Consolidating real estate services
- Tourism and health services

• Solidarity: Integration and social cohesion

• Cultural and international events city.

• Natural site.

3.4. Santa Cruz Town Hall's Press Office

This municipal entity has, like almost every Spanish town hall, a specific department dedicated to working with the media. The press office is made up of a director of communications and a team of 6 journalists who distribute the work based on the topics and councils. The press office is in charge of the dissemination of news generated by the Town Hall throughout tasks such as sending out press releases to the media, organizing interviews and special features; as well as the publication of news articles on the website, local radio and television programs. The type of work carried out in the press office is framed within the traditional Press agent model described by Grunning and Hunt (2000), where the flow of communication, although bi directional, concentrates its effort in providing more support to the person issuing the information. Also, the repercussions of the press releases published in the local media are closely monitored.

In this context of technological development, and given the widespread growth of advertisement in the media, as well as the voracious competition among institutional and private brands trying to attract the attention of the public; the Town Hall of Santa Cruz de Tenerife has implemented a pioneer system in Spain. Apart from the press office, a specific department has been created to deal with corporate communication and relations with the citizens.

The main goal of this new bureau is to become a resource that facilitates communication between the Town Hall and its citizens. To do so, a combination of communication strategies and resources, that are closer to institutional marketing than to traditional press management, have been applied. The available technological resources have also been taken into account with the model of Smart Cities as an objective. Among the tasks that this new department has put into place you'll find:

• Corporate social media guidelines

• City Brand development and launch

• Facilitate public information through the institutional transparency portal

• Resource optimization during institutional campaign management

• Design of communication strategies for citizen awareness

• Creation of a unified corporate image

• Implementation of technological tools that facilitate multi-directional communication with citizens

These actions mark the road map of the department's goals to establish a fluid communication between the institution and the citizens. Bridging this gap is possible thanks to the implementation of technological innovation tools, such as, the modernization of the communication channels with the citizens. In this sense, the Town Hall's technological infrastructures have all been renewed. A special section has been created on the website enabling the public to obtain specific information about the municipality; facilitating the exercise of institutional transparency and citizen participation which will lead to promote innovation in the city.

3.5. Citybrand and tourism repositioning: the marketing plan

The measurements taken according to the local tourism policies are join in one document that develops the following actions.

In first place, the definition of the touristic offer in order to improve its positioning in the market having always a unique selling point: mild weather all year round, safety and Europeans standards services. This can imply the following tourist products developments, which are not exclusive from others that could be defined:

-Santa Cruz as a meeting point (for business and congresses)

- Santa Cruz as a cultural experience

- Santa Cruz as a scale for cruise ships

- Santa Cruz as a place to enjoy Nature Tourism (Anaga Forest Reserve)

- Santa Cruz as a Sportive tourism

- Santa Cruz as a senior tourism destination

Following this path that means the reactivation of the city, the Historic Centre of Santa Cruz was declared by the Government of the Canary Islands as a Tourist Interest Zone and this implies that it is allowed to open shops, leisure areas and restaurants outside the general regime of business hours by coordinating schedules and responsibilities.

The main objective of this decision is to enable the entrepreneurs to carry out their activity within the Historic District, a necessary instrument to be competitive in current times and make the capital of Tenerife a focus of business attraction, adding value to the city.

Another important element for positioning is the improvement of road signs, which has been articulated to bring the main tourist and commercial centers closer to the city. Also, the signals guide the tourist, identifying the main popular attractions, museums and cultural, as well as historical and scientific offer. This action has been combined with the improvement of pedestrian sidewalks for local residents as well as visitors.

Organizing monthly itinerants fairs such as Come to Santa Cruz's, are initiatives conceived for commercial revitalization, restoration and leisure activities for all audiences and they take place on the first Sundays of each month within the area of the city's great tourist influx.

Referring to stimulus demand, the city council together with employer associations organized and share costs for advertising season campaigns joining both interests; public and private. These campaigns focus promotions at key points such as the airports, the port, local hotels and public transport vehicles (buses, trolley car, taxis). In many cases, these advertising campaigns show a friendly and peaceful image of the city and visually nice.

3.6. Santa Cruz City graphic design: the role of logo and claim

Building communities and cultivating relationships among these geographical and virtual communities is an emerging dimension of the branding process. Santa Cruz, The heart of Tenerife branding program started in 2016 with the aim of gathering and uniting committed individuals who are willing to do something for Santa Cruz city and to make it a better place to live and to promote. This drive was the key message spread by the Major of the City Council who leaded several awareness campaigns to clean the city, such as Santa Cruz Graffiti – free initiatives and removing illegal posters throughout the capital.

These proposals are from the bottom- up rather than a marketer's approach that could force an artificial brand concept upon the citizens and its city. Moreover, these civic and participatory initiatives have been essential for branding the city and helped to redefine the brand as a home to share.

One of the first actions taken was the development of a detailed brand guidebook for Santa Cruz that outlines the visual elements of the official logo and how it ought to be used by all the employees and institutions that belonged to the city council. This guideline is freely available on the city council's website. Then, the identification of the brand values took place, based on organic and induced values such as architectural heritage, the sea, Anaga Forest reserve, the beach and cultural attractions, all of them integrated in the brand.

Figure 1. Oficial Brand Santa Cruz de Tenerife

Source: https://www.elcorazondetenerife.com/

Santa Cruz is the point of departure and arrival and the place where decisions are made and a more urban offer. The central "A" is replaced by an inverted heart as an arrowhead and another one equally faced generating a speech about centrality, dialogue, interaction, pointing out that there is the center

of Tenerife or the kilometer 0 of the island. Regarding the font size of the words in the logo is considerably big and it is built in capital letters. The size refers to the point of emphasis while here it is Santa Cruz being a kind of 'capital' where nature and ocean stands behind. There seems to be an association with the central power of the city being a commercial capital throughout the history. Commenting on the color preference, the basic shade of the logo is turquoise blue and green; blue is a natural color that represents the sea and the sky, it has a calming effect. Green refers to Anaga, the green lung of the island.

In many cultures blue is significant in religious beliefs but not in Spanish one. In the logo a specific tone of blue turquoise- is chosen which has a connotation that the logo not only represents the city of Santa Cruz but also the Canaries, as a fortunate archipelago surrounded by the sea and with soft weather all year round. The meaning might be extracted considering the touristic position of the Canaries in the touristic imaginary of the European Union as it's one of the most demanded destinations.

The claim *The heart of Tenerife* positions the brand as the center of the destination, as well as it reinforces its main differentiator value and authenticity.

3.7. Corporate good practices guidelines for social media

During the last years, digital social networks have undergone a rapid process of implantation in the public administrations and have become an essential information exchange channel for the development of a compromised society. In this sense, local public administrations have also started using these technologies to improve the communication with their citizens and promote a more accessible institution. In order to do so it is necessary to apply a cohesive communication policy, with a clear strategy and defined objectives of what is expected from social media presence (Delponti and Rodríguez, 2017).

In order to check if Santa Cruz implemented the mentioned strategy, taking into account that there are no precise operating guidelines for the existing social media linked to the institution, a specific observation has been carried out. As a result of the initial observations shared with the city council communication department, multiple corrective measures have been implemented in order to ensure a more effective communication strategy with the city's residents, attending to their concerns and comments regarding management. The use of an inclusive, non-sexist language that allows a more horizontal dialogue with social media followers has also been applied.

Nobody disagree considering Social media as fundamental platforms in creating virtual communities and websites are the primary, most popular and obligatory tool in branding places. It not only helps to increase place awareness or familiarity, but also to shape city's image (Delponti, 2014). Santa Cruz website includes general information of the city, a photo gallery, city councils projects and plans, as well as accommodation information and maps. Through this website, Santa Cruz develops its brand by presenting the system of identification (logo, advertising claim), the city's offer (attraction lists, calendar of events ad maps), behavior (news, plans, policies, projects), as well as interacting channels as social media or the citizens inbox.

3.8. Technological innovation and institutional transparency

In order that citizens can access all the information necessary to exercise the right of access to public information, the Town Hall has created a prominent section on the website where all the information is added in accordance with the law.

Technological progress is essential in order to develop transparency and administrative modernization, leading to better and greater access to information by the citizenship (Delponti and Rodríguez, 2017). In this sense, the Town Hall has implemented several systems for every department that facilitate this role and interaction with the citizen, such as the electronic signature system that facilitates the flow of information within the administration. Only in 2016, 94,000 electronically signed documents were achieved. In addition, the Office of Virtual Registration (ORVE for its acronym in Spanish) has been implemented, exchanging more than 10,000 electronic registrations with other administrations.

The implementation of electronic invoices also enables a better knowledge of public expenditure and investment in different projects. During 2016, around 3.391 electronic invoices were presented.

In this same line of administrative simplification and being environmentally responsible, it was decided that certificates were no longer going to be issued using paper format. During just one year (2016), 35.000€ were saved with more than 7.000 certificate exchanges with other administrations.

These are just some examples of the various actions in technological innovation being carried out, making it possible to advance and reach corporate communication goals and relationships with

local citizenship by open data and with the idea of creating a smart city atmosphere, that ensures progressive compliance with the law on institutional transparency, access to public information and good governance. All these aspirations are part of the city brand promise.

4. Results discussion

Considering different perspectives on city branding scientific literature and the review of case studies from other cities helped to establish theoretical contributions and to understand the evolving the state of the art, which contributed to meet the proposed objectives. We succeeded assessing the current conditions prevailing in the branding of the island's capital along with possible efficient collaborations between stakeholders.

Difficulties related to various disciplinary approaches, terminologies, and unclear measurements have characterized the major difficulties in accomplishing this study. However, analyzing the identification of one city from others combining its name and characteristics that make it unique and exclusive is what we focus on in this case study.

After observing the behavior of corporate communication and taking into account that after the economic crisis of 2008, organizations understood the value of communication and Public Relations (Almansa Martínez and Fernández Souto, 2020), it is clear that it is a sector that has a growing consideration within the different entities. It seems also clear that the definition and the use of a symbol created for branding Santa Cruz city does not only helped to recognize this particular place, but also it favored the efforts for strengthening a common citizen awareness about the city, as well as promoting its tourist appeal to exterior investors and visitors.

One of the most interesting aspects of this study is what actually takes place in Tenerife may reflect the result of tourist transformation patterns in other Canary Islands as well as in other Atlantic African Coast destinations that follow its steps. At the same time, we emphasize the need to investigate a greater number of medium-sized islands in future investigations to verify our findings.

Another inference we found as a result of this case study has to do with the city as a tourist destination, with reference to current and potential tourists, regardless of their place of residence, and associated with tangible and intangible city attractions that Santa Cruz has to offer.

Focusing on the actions directed to the resident public or to those more connected to the city (neighbors, groups, possible investors, etc.), it is possible to conclude that the several communication, PR and marketing actions put into place positively worked to familiarize the interested groups with the philosophy behind the new brand. To achieve this goal, the corporative communication office worked on promoting this city brand in resident audiences, in order to get to know it and make them feel it as theirs, according to the values and attributes that define it.

Apart from traditional advertising campaigns that include ads in newspapers, radio and television, street marketing and digital marketing campaigns were also positively carried out. Clear examples would be the placement of billboards on the motorway, airports and places with high population.

In addition, a corporeal sculpture of the brand logo was placed in the area with the highest tourist influx. This sculpture is used as the city's emblem, and both locals and tourists take self-pictures of and share them on social media.

Although the above positive results, it is also possible to bode that as long as branding Santa Cruz City turns into campaign-driven rather than policy driven the process and engages a wide range of stakeholders and interest groups, the city brand could become vague and waken.

5. Conclusions

Findings from the case study suggest that organizing broad stakeholder participation in the branding process on site is an unavoidable necessity in times of globalization, and promoting the territory on the basis of that branding, is not an issue less.

Only coordinating organization that strategically overseas this process and creating synergies between the Island/region brand with city brand and not only focusing on economic interests, the project will succeed. Cultural and social goals should be also considered, especially in developing city brand communities.

We can also note that after observing the case and interpreting stakeholders points of view, the purpose of Santa Cruz de Tenerife city in having its own brand has led it to identify an element of those characteristics that will help in the future to achieve a greater social cohesion and connection between

neighbors and citizens with their place of residence. A positive attitude towards the city, as well as a better coexistence between inhabitants and an impulse in business, culture and work is also expected by stakeholders, as a result.

Future studies will tell how far Santa Cruz's corporate communications office will get in terms of implementing and coordinating the city branding project, but the theory and practice of branding cities in East and South Europe are lagging forward those of the Central, West and Northern, that often serve as a benchmark for the rest or the world.

Finally, although local academics were skeptical about the launch of the brand of the city of Santa Cruz, the international position of the city is different, since it is considered one of the most livable cities in the Canary Islands and the brand achieves a segmentation by consistency and objectives for developing policies that play an important role in the political, economic and cultural spheres.

6. Contributions

Contributions	Name
Conception and design of the study	Patricia Delponti & Almudena Barrientos-Báez
Documentary research	David Caldevilla-Domínguez
Data collection	Patricia Delponti & Almudena Barrientos-Báez
Analysis and critical interpretation of data	David Caldevilla-Domínguez & Patricia Delponti
Review and validation of versions	Almudena Barrientos-Báez & David Caldevilla-Domínguez

7. Bibliographyc references

[1] Almansa-Martínez, A., & Fernández-Souto, A. B. (2020). Professional Public Relations (PR) trends and challenges. *Profesional de la Información, 29*(3), e290303. https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.may.03

[2] Apolo, D., Báez, V., Pauker, L., & Pasquel, G. (2017). Gestión de Comunicación Corporativa: consideraciones para el abordaje de su estudio y práctica. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social,* 72, 521-539. https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2017-1177en

[3] Ashworth, G. J. (2009). The instruments of place branding: how is it done?. *European Spatial Research and Policy, 16*(1), 9-22. https://doi.org/10.2478/v10105-009-0001-9

[4] Braun, E. (2012). Putting city branding into practice. *Journal of Brand Management,* 19, 257-267. https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2011.55

[5] Braun, E., Kavaratzis, M., & Zenker, S. (2013). My city – my brand: the different roles of residents in place branding. *Journal of Place Management and Development,* 6(1), 18-28. https://doi.org/10.1108/17538331311306087

[6] Delponti Macchione, P. (2014). Estrategias de notoriedad y gestión de la reputación en redes sociales. (Estudio de caso). In *Comunicación e Interactividad* (Eds). ACCI (Asociación Cultural y Científica Iberoamericana).

[7] Delponti Macchione, P. (2016). Relaciones Públicas y medios no convencionales (BTL) en la convergencia digital de las empresas. In *La Pantalla insomne*. Cuadernos Artesanos de Comunicación, 98. https://doi.org/10.4185/cac103

[8] Delponti Macchione, P., & Rodríguez Wangüemert, C. (2017). *Digitation and its impact on the reputation of local institutions.* International PR 2017 Conference, Barcelona, Spain.

[9] De-San-Eugenio, J., & Ginesta, X. (2020). El branding territorial ante los nuevos desafíos de la sociedad: redefinición teórica y análisis de los factores que contribuyen a su implementación exitosa. In *Comunicación y diversidad.* VII Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Española de Investigación de la Comunicación (AE-IC), pp. 307-318. Valencia, EPI SL. https://doi.org/10.3145/AE-IC-epi.2020.e26

[10] Fernández-Gómez, J. D., & Gordillo-Rodríguez, M. T. (2015). Aproximación teórica al branding relacional: de las teorías de Fournier a las brand communities. *Revista Mediterránea de*

Comunicación, 6(1), 131-152. https://doi.org/10.14198/MEDCOM2015.6.1.08

[11] Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory.* Aldine Press.

[12] Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (2000). *Dirección de Relaciones Públicas.* Gestión 2000.

[13] Guillemette, F. (2006). L'approche de la Grounded Theory; pour innover? *Recherches qualitatives, 26*(1), 32-50. http://www.recherche-qualitative.qc.ca/Revue.html

[14] Hospers, G.-J. (2020). A Short Reflection on City Branding and its Controversies. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografiee, 111*(1), 18-23. https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12386

[15] Insch, A. (2011). Branding the city as an attractive place to live. In K. Dinnie (Ed.) *City branding: Theory and cases* (pp. 8-14). Palgrave Macmillan.

[16] Jokela, S. (2020). Transformative city branding and the evolution of the entrepreneurial city: The case of 'Brand New Helsinki'. *Urban Studies, 57*(10), 2031-2046. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098019867073

[17] Kavaratzis, M. (2011). The dishonest relationship between city marketing and culture: reflections on the theory and the case of Budapest. *Journal of Town and City Management, 1*(4), 334-345.

[18] Kavaratzis, M. (2004). From city marketing to city branding: Towards a theoretical framework for developing city brands. *Place Branding, 1*(1), 58-73.

[19] Lucarelli, A., & Berg, P. (2011). City Branding: A State-of-the-art Review of the Research Domain. *Journal of Place Management and Development, 4*(1), 9-27. https://doi.org/10.1108/17538331111117133

[20] Martínez-Sala, A. M., & Campillo-Alhama, C. (2018). Los eventos, herramienta clave en las estrategias de comunicación de marcas turísticas: de la linealidad a la transmedialidad. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación, 9*(1), 291-312. https://www.doi.org/10.14198/MEDCOM2018.9.1.16

[21] Mehan, A. (2017). *Urban Branding Politics in Post-Fordist Cities: The Case of Turin, Italy.* Fourth Annual International Conference. Valletta, Malta. https://cutt.ly/7EPM5ll

[22] Oguztimur, S., & Akturan, U. (2015). Synthesis of City Branding Literature (1988–2014) as a Research Domain. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 18*(4). https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2054

[23] Warnaby, G. (2009). Towards a Service-dominant Place Marketing Logic. *Marketing Theory*, 9, 403-423. http://doi.org/10.1177/1470593109346898

[24] World Tourism Organization/UNWTO (2019). https://bit.ly/2Z03fzw

[25] Zamorano, M. (2020). El modelo emprendedor de políticas culturales y el destination branding: un análisis a partir del filme Vicky Cristina Barcelona. *EURE (Santiago), 46*(139), 91-112. https://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0250-71612020000300091

Dr. Eva SÁNCHEZ.AMBOAGE
University of A Coruña. Spain. eva.sanchez.amboage@udc.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9058-2937

Dr. Carlos TOURAL-BRAN
University of Santiago de Compostela. Spain. carlos.toural@usc.gal. http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0961-3925

Dr. Matías MEMBIELA-POLLÁN
University of A Coruña. Spain. matias.membiela@udc.es. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1657-2815

Dr. Verónica CRESPO-PEREIRA
University of A Coruña. Spain. veronica.crespo@udc.es. http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7373-7204

Short video content in the brand strategy. Analysis of the use of TikTok by the Prado Museum

Short video content en la estrategia de marca. Análisis de uso de TikTok por el Museo del Prado

Abstract

In a society marked by the digital issue and the global pandemic by COVID-19, museums have experienced the need to join new social platforms where the youngest audiences are. This context has led to an intensification of the use of these channels, as well as a reconfiguration of communication strategies in the digital environment by museums. This research analyses how the Museo Nacional del Prado uses the TokTok platform within its brand strategy and studies its production of short video content, a characteristic format of this social network. To this end, a case study was conducted in which a structured interview with personnel from the museum's communication and social networks area was preformed, as well as a content analysis for which an ad hoc analytical guide was prepared. The results show that the narrative structure and the language used are always adapted to the public and the platform with rigour and respect, using an informal register with the aim of transmitting knowledge while still connecting more efficiently with the consumption pattern of the social network.

Resumen

En una sociedad marcada por la cuestión digital y la pandemia mundial por COVID-19, los museos han experimentado la necesidad de incorporarse a nuevas plataformas sociales, donde se encuentran los públicos más jóvenes. El contexto ha propiciado una intensificación del uso de estos canales, así como una reconfiguración de las estrategias comunicativas en el entorno digital por parte de los museos. El objetivo de esta investigación es analizar cómo el Museo Nacional del Prado usa la plataforma TikTok dentro de su estrategia de marca y estudiar su producción de short video content, formato característico de esta red social. Para ello, se aborda un estudio de caso en el que se desarrollan una entrevista estructurada con personal del área de comunicación y redes sociales del museo, así como un análisis de contenido para el que se elabora una ficha ad hoc. Los resultados muestran que la estructura narrativa y el lenguaje utilizado se adecúan siempre al público y a la plataforma desde el rigor y el respeto, usando un registro informal con el objetivo de transmitir conocimiento sin dejar de conectar de forma más eficiente con el patrón de consumo de la red social.

Keywords

Tourist communication; brand strategy; short video content; TikTok; Museo Nacional del Prado

Palabras clave

Comunicación turística; estrategia de marca; short video content; TikTok; Museo Nacional del Prado

1. Introduction

Tourism has experienced consistent growth and profound diversification, to the point that it has become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world, acting as a driving force of socioeconomic progress. Among the different types of tourism, cultural tourism is recognized as one of the most important forms of tourist traffic in the world, particularly in Europe (Niemczyk, 2013). It has great capacity for economic development (Mestanza & Revilla, 2016), which companies, communities and individuals alike have each tapped into to generate employment, especially in the 21st century (Lord, 2002).

Cultural tourism is defined as any tourist activity in which the essential motivation of the visitor is to learn, discover, experience and consume tangible and intangible cultural products at a particular destination. It includes everything from art and architecture, historical and cultural heritage to culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and living cultures, with their respective lifestyles, beliefs and traditions (UNWTO, 2020).

In this sector, museums have positioned themselves as one of the main manifestations of contemporary cultural tourism, due to their power of attraction. Depending on the user's experience, we can distinguish between two types of museums. On the one hand are museums focused on storing and conserving different works and objects of value, such as art museums, for example. On the other hand are those museums whose main objective is focused on the visitor's cognitive experience, such as in the case of science museums (Su & Teng, 2018). As resources for consumption, more than agents of conservation, museums offer experiences based on a certain topic, supported by interpretation strategies designed to inform and generate interest on the part of the visitor (Prentice, 2001). This function of museums as settings for experiences, as opposed to being mere sites dedicated to conservation, has led to a revolution in museology, due to its functions of education, entertainment and interaction with the visitor, which have become increasingly more novel and creative (Roppola, 2013; Su & Teng, 2018; Belenioti & Vassiliadis, 2017).

As businesses, museums have also redefined their marketing and communication strategies in order to be competitive and to successfully position themselves in the market, which allows them to reach a larger number of visitors. In this sense, the digital context and the Internet have created new opportunities and challenges for cultural organizations in general, and the artistic sector in particular. Specifically, the social media has made it a key factor in how cultural organizations communicate with their audience and take part in the marketing strategy (Amanatidis, et al.2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated a trend that was already present among European museums, such as the creation of content through the social media (TEA-AECOM, 2020). Among other actions, during the main lockdown period in Europe (March-May 2020), the museums opened their doors virtually, presenting their exhibits to the world, generating interest and providing entertainment to possible future visitors who, due to national and international restrictions on movement, could not travel to see them at that time (Gretzel, et al., 2020).

Among them was the Prado National Museum, which held the thirteenth place in the ranking of the top European museums visited, with a total of 3,203,000 people visiting per year, and a daily average attendance of 8,800 (TEA-AECOM, 2020). The Prado stood out not only for having performed important work from a social, educational and entertainment perspective on social networks such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, but also for its emergence on the TikTok platform, with innovative content creation. It is the only Spanish museum in the European ranking (TEA-AECOM, 2020) to have an official profile on the social media platform, as the only other Spanish museum included in the ranking, the Reina Sofía Museum, still does not have an official profile on TikTok. This new brand strategy undoubtedly focuses on a young audience, consumers of short videos on the social network.

Based on this, the aim of this research is to analyze how the National Prado Museum uses the TikTok platform as part of its brand strategy and to study its production of short video content, the characteristic format of this social network.

2. Museum marketing and short video content on TikTok

Museums perform their functions in a highly competitive market environment, in which they must face competitive situations and, on occasion, downward trends in the number of visitors. As a result, over the last two decades, the need has emerged to implement marketing techniques in the museum sector, casting aside cynical views of brand building in favor of developing branding strategies applied to non-profit and often public cultural centers, such as museums (Belenioti, Tsourvakas & Vassiliadis, 2019). In this context, with this need in terms of brand creation, research has been promoted on the positive implications of the use of marketing techniques by museums (Kylander & Stone, 2012). In this regard, Cole (2008) alludes to the positive contribution of marketing to the survival of museums by highlighting two fundamental aspects. On the one hand is its market-oriented capacity to study tastes, preferences

and needs of the current and potential audience, and on the other, a product of the former, the opportunity to increase the number of people who visit the museum, which would enable it to be financially viable.

In greater detail with regards to marketing strategies, the museum's brand is crucial and necessary in order to strengthen its identity and highlight its characteristics, among which are the works it houses, its artists and the architecture of the museum (Dal Falco, Federica & Stavros Vassos, 2017). In addition, other authors state that a museum with a recognized brand has the capacity not only to position the museum itself in the minds of tourists, it also has the power to do so for the destination in the global tourism market (Rodner, Preece & Chang, 2019).

With regard to brand management, the concept of marketing communication tools is essential (Keller, 2009). In this sense, the use of social networks by the museums not only provides profitable and direct communication with the audience, it also expands the museum experience beyond the limits of time and place (Vassiliadis, Chris & Zoe-Charis Belenioti, 2017) (Budge, 2018). Likewise, this practice increases the loyalty of visitors to the museum and its positioning in the market, thanks to the *e-word of mouth* (eWOM) (Colladon, Grippa & Innarella, 2020), in other words, thanks to the content generated by tourists and visitors on the social networks in the form of comments and opinions about a company or tourist destination, which are shared on both Internet platforms dedicated to tourist reservations and on general content social networks (Litvin et al.2008; Hernández-Méndez, Muñoz-Leiva & Sánchez-Fernández, 2015; Buhalis, López & Martínez-González, 2020). As various authors have studied in recent years, user-generated content has a considerable influence on the choice of a tourist destination (Oliveira, Araujo & Tam, 2020).

In general, a summary of the benefits for museums of using social networks is as follows: maintaining potential contact with the public, attracting additional audiences, advertising their collections and events, providing information about their schedules and temporary exhibits, getting the community involved and finally, strengthening communication between visitors and the institution (González, 2016). With regard to the latter benefit, it is important to add that the social networks make it possible to bolster communication with visitors while facilitating the emergence of inbound marketing strategies that help with the process of creating and maintaining the brand.

Unlike traditional outbound marketing, inbound marketing is intended to attract consumers by offering value contents, relevant experiences and non-intrusive advertising (Lehnert, Goupil & Brand, 2020) through blogs, podcasts, e-books, e-newsletters, web pages, search engines, social media marketing and content marketing, among other options (Dakouan, Benabdelouahed & Anabir, 2019; Jiménez, Alles & Franco, 2018). In recent years, with the aim of countering the saturation of advertising in the traditional media, companies have opted for inbound marketing-based strategies in order to build upon the potential opportunities to establish relations with clients and increase the probability of sales for a certain product or service, in this case, a visit to a museum.

More specifically, content marketing is intended to create contents designed specifically to attract a certain type of client, capturing their attention, winning their loyalty and ultimately converting them into a brand influencer (Soegoto & Simbolon, 2018; Du Plessis, 2017). In doing so, brands create and distribute informational or entertainment content free of charge, particularly on the social networks, which is consumed voluntarily and subconsciously by the users. By distributing this content on a wide variety of platforms, the companies create brand awareness and credibility with their online community of clients (Wall & Spinuzzi, 2018).

The content shared on the social networks can come in different formats. Specifically, video is increasingly more popular and is becoming one of the main tools within the digital strategy of businesses. In fact, 61% of Generation Z and Millennials report watching increasingly more videos on social network applications, especially since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Statista, 2021a).

More specifically, short videos are a clear reflection of fast-paced modern life. The growing trend to consume content quickly and in short formats has triggered the development of platforms to share videos, such as Instagram, Snapchat and more recently, TikTok, contexts in which the short video contents are currently taking on an unprecedented and prominent role. The increase in their daily use implies that these platforms are also used in tourist contexts (Wang, 2020), such as in the case of museums.

In the case we are considering, TikTok is a platform focused on sharing short videos (the standard references recommended to users are 15 seconds, 60 seconds or 3 minutes). This social network has become a true phenomenon worldwide, as the platform that has grown the most during the period between 2019 and 2021, coinciding with the era of greatest restrictions on mobility as part of the measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, with an increase of 38% (Statista, 2021b). In May of 2020,

it was the most frequently downloaded application in the world, not including video games, and was installed more than 111.9 million times (SensorTower, 2020). The predicted numbers of TikTok users around the world are also very satisfactory for the coming years, with figures than could exceed 1.3 million by 2025 (Statista, 2021b).

Different authors, among them Suárez-Álvarez and García-Jiménez (2021) identify entertainment, socialization and creative self-expression as the main motivators of the consumption and production of contents on TikTok by the native digital generation, for whom digital technologies are a natural part of their world, and which they access every day from different devices.

The users of this platform have a variety of templates, filters and visual effects, as well as an incorporated music library, for the creation of videos. The most popular categories are audio performances, dance and parodies of musical clips (Su, Baker, Doyle & Yan, 2020). In addition, the videos created can be consumed on the same platform or reposted on other social network channels, such as Wechat, Weibo and Instagram.

Since TikTok has editing tools with short learning curves, it encourages the proliferation of user-generated contents (Du, Liechty, Santos & Park, 2020) with great production value. At the same time, it uses recommendation algorithms to allow viewers to easily find videos of interest to them (Lu, Xing & Zhicong Lu, 2019).

It is also necessary to refer to the verticality of the videos, since TikTok uses a full screen format that distances users from other stimuli from the device, such as notifications, battery level, time and date information, etc. It boasts itself as an ideal format to attract and isolate distractions to the consumers-users unrelated to the consumption of the content itself. In addition to these conditions, we must add that this characteristic use of the platform involves a complex process of attention to and processing of information by the recipients, due to the condensed and rapid nature of the message (Bautista, de la Casa & Ruiz, 2021).

TikTok thus represents a new tool that museums are starting to use to build their brands (Su, Baker, Doyle & Yan, 2020), since among other applications, it helps create a context in which a relationship is built with the users-customers based on less formal and more entertaining proposals, without abandoning the corporate and advertising image. In this sense, they tend to opt for audience support without saturating their profile with traditional advertising formulas (Bautista, de la Casa & Ruiz, 2021).

3. Methodology

The aim of this research is focused on analyzing how the Prado National Museum uses the TikTok platform within its brand strategy and to study its production of short video content, the characteristic format of this social network, and therefore it was decided to conduct a case study. According to Coller (2000), case studies can be used as an exploratory tool, but also to verify and build theories, approaching the actors in such a way that makes it possible to successfully understand and interpret their actions. Likewise, Coller (2000) & Yin (1994) state that case studies are a valuable tool in other disciplines in the Social Sciences, especially for studies of a touristic nature (Bramwell & Lane, 2011).

Methodological triangulation is the strategy chosen to carry out the research. The principle of methodological triangulation, according to Ruiz (2005), allows us to check whether the data obtained through the different sources of information are related to one another, i.e., if the effects explored in the target phenomenon of the study converge from different perspectives. Among the different types of triangulation, methodological triangulation promotes the use of several collection methods in the same study. This is the case of our study, in which interviews and content analysis are both employed with the aim of increasing the credibility and validity of the research results (Noble & Heale, 2019). The use of different methodologies in the same study has become a common practice in contemporary social sciences (Forni & Grande, 2020).

From a qualitative perspective, a structured interview is administered to the managers of the communication and social networks team at the Prado National Museum. According to authors like Strauss and Corbin (2002), qualitative research is any type of research that produces findings that are not reached by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. These authors state that qualitative methodology consists of more than one research method, such as content analysis, discourse analysis, interviews, observation, discussion groups, etc.

The most appropriate interview typology to achieve the objective proposed in the present research is the structured interview. This type of interview makes it possible to aggregate and quantify the results in a simple manner. According to Bell (2004), it can have different forms, such as a questionnaire or a list to be completed by the interviewer, in order to save time and ensure that all pertinent topics are addressed.

The interview that was carried out consists of ten questions that were posed to the communication and social network department at the Prado National Museum, and that were answered by a team manager on August 31, 2021, regarding three general areas:

- Channels of communication in which the museum is present.
- The digital communication strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- TikTok: official profile creation, content typology and the impact that has been generated.

In terms of content analysis, and covering the quantitative perspective, this is defined by Piñuel Raigada (2002) as the set of interpretive methods applied to communicative products (messages, texts or discourses), based on measurement techniques (either quantitative or qualitative) that are intended to develop or process relevant data on said products. Depending on the purpose of the research, the content analysis can be exploratory, descriptive and/or explanatory.

Accordingly, 107 videos were analyzed that were posted by the Prado National Museum since it began activity on TikTok on June 12, 2020 until July 30, 2021.The analysis sheet developed to perform the information and data capture related to the content analysis is structured as follows:

1. Date: information is collected about the publication date of the record.

2. Content categories (thematic):

   a. Masterpieces/curiosities: considered when the official museum platform managers choose reference works about which they explain different curiosities.

   b. Restoration: considered when the official museum platform managers post videos explaining the restoration processes of various works.

   c. Events: this refers to content that is generated in the context of the international days celebrating various specific themes (International Tourism Day, for example) or celebrations organized by the museum itself (celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Prado National Museum).

   d. Promotional: considered when the information provided in the audiovisual material refers to new museum offerings provided to the public, such as the opening of a new hall, the start of a new exhibit or the schedule for an event, for example.

   e. Questions: the content is considered to match this typology when a question previously asked by a user is responded to directly.

   f. Work at the museum: refers to posts related to technical works performed by museum staff.

3. Audio: provides details related to the audio of each post.

   a. Music provided by the platform: considered when the audio used corresponds to a theme song that is added using the musical database provided by TikTok. In this case, the chosen song also works as an element for indexing the content and interacting with the specific button to access all the videos on the platform on which users have used the same theme song.

   b. Music provided by the museum: considered when the audio has been uploaded to the platform by the users themselves, in this case the museum.

   c. Original audio: considered when a narrator or voice-over introduces information in a video, possibly at the same time as a theme song.

4. Interaction:

   a. Likes: the number of likes received by each post is counted.

   b. Comments: the number of comments platform users have made on each post is recorded.

   c. Shares: the number of times users have shared on each post by the museum on their profiles is recorded.

5. Hashtags: the key words are specified that the profile managers use to index each video posted so that when users click on it, they can access all the profile posts or those of other users who have used the same relational keywords.

4. Results

4.1. The perspective of the protagonists: an interview with the communication and social network managers at the Prado National Museum

The interview was conducted with staff from the communications and social network management department at the Prado National Museum. The museum has various channels of communication and dissemination in the digital environment, such as its official website, its official profiles on the social networks (it is present on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok), as well as on YouTube and Spotify, and finally, the communications team also creates newsletters focused on its area of cultural dissemination. In each of them, the keys to all brand actions are "humanity and sincerity in dealing with the contents, the increasingly more active participation of the public, dealing with relevant topics to society and doing so with rigor and respect," as indicated by the communication and networks team.

In what we can call the "COVID context", it can be seen how the digital communication strategy of the Prado National Museum has been strengthened as a result of the commitment to intensify its presence on the different digital platforms where it has official profiles, as well as the implementation of new spaces, such as the museum's official account on TikTok. A good example of this is the increase in human resources in the social network management department, as confirmed by the team itself, where the staff has increased from one to two people.

The Prado National Museum obviously has not eluded the impact of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. On March 12, 2020 it closed its doors to the public and did not receive any visitors to its facilities until June 6 of that same year, a closure only surpassed by that which occurred during the Civil War (Museo Nacional del Prado, 2021). From this moment on, the communication and networks team indicates that "the institutional web page and the social networks have been the museum's great allies in reaching the public."Bearing witness to this is the more than 200 live broadcasts via Instagram produced for its more than 800,000 followers and the increase in its Facebook community, where 113,000 new users have expanded the museum's presence on the social network by 246% since the start of the pandemic.

Worthy of special mention is the creation of the museum's official profile on TikTok, as its communication strategy on a digital level was reconfigured in response to the exceptional situation caused by the pandemic. According to them, the idea emerged as a way to "celebrate museum week on TikTok". It was a decision based on a clear objective, as the communication team points out:"We were seeking to transmit knowledge and a passion for art to a young audience."

The content that the Prado National Museum generates on TikTok seeks "to help others enjoy and better understand the works of art and how a museum like the Prado works."Furthermore, one of the keys to the material posted is that "specialists from different areas talk about what their job is," thus giving a face to those who make the museum operations possible. A large part of the videos are focused on "showing the collection in a more informal manner" and on "responding to questions sent in by users."

Network department managers indicate that the Prado's official profile on TikTok "connects the museum to a young audience that was very difficult to reach by other means."They state that this young group "is an audience that is interested in the content we post and ask their questions through means of interaction such as the comments."

In general strategic terms, the online and offline offerings complement one another from the point of view of the museum's communication and networks team, since "taking into account the Prado's international vocation, it is increasingly serving a type of audience for whom it would be difficult to enjoy an on-site visit, for example, due to geographical circumstances."

4.2. Results of the quantitative analysis: the use of TikTok by the Prado National Museum

This study analyzed the entire audiovisual production of the official Prado National Museum profile on the TikTok social network that has been shared since its creation in June of 2020 until July 2021. Altogether, 107 videos have been studied.

4.2.1 Calendar of the posts

First of all, with regard to the timing of the posts, it should be indicated that, to date, the Prado National Museum has never posted more than ten videos per month, as can be seen in Figure 1. With this in mind, September and October 2020 were the most prolific periods, with the largest number of monthly videos, while the months with the least audiovisual material posted on TikTok occur on six occasions.

Source: author's own work

4.2.2 Topics, interaction and audio accompanying the videos posted by the Prado Museum on TikTok

The 107 videos posted by the Prado National Museum during the period of study have been organized into 6 different thematic categories, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: List of the number of videos by topic, interaction and type of audio used by the Prado National Museum on TikTok
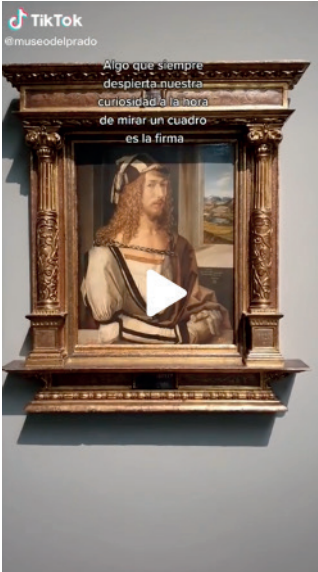

Source: author's own work

The category "masterpieces and curiosities" is the one with the largest number of posts, with a total of 63. Table 1 shows an example of three videos representing the first category of topics, "masterpieces and curiosities". Example 1 corresponds to the video that obtained the maximum interaction in the category, with a total of 24,616 reactions (likes, comments and shares). In this case, the post "how to view the work *El Lavatorio*" shows a short video (51 seconds) in which a museum employee, with voice-over and original audio, comments on the work by Jacopo Tintoretto, pointing out some curiosities about it, such as the point from which the painting should be viewed according to its creator.

Example number 2 also shows a 51-second video containing an explanation of the signatures of different painters, with voice-over and original audio, with the difference that in this case, short segments of text are used make the explanation easier to follow. This type of reinforcement starts to be used in posts after April 8, 2021 and it is very useful to follow the explanation and even to understand the video without the need for audio.

Finally, example number 3 shows the work "*La familia de Carlos IV*" in 27 seconds, in which audio provided by the TikTok platform is used as a musical background.

Table 1: Examples of short video content in the "masterpieces and curiosities" category

Example 1, video in the "masterpiece" category: how to view "El lavatorio", 1548-1549	Example 2, video in the "masterpiece" category: Where is the signature?	Example 3, video in the "masterpiece" category: La familia de Carlos IV, Goya, 1800
URL of the vídeo: https://bit.ly/3mQpkus	URL of the vídeo: https://bit.ly/2WNCnld	URL of the vídeo: https://bit.ly/3GwJNfb

Source: author's own work

Another content category that also has a high level of interaction with each video is that dedicated to information about "restoration" work, which accounts for a total of 22 videos, with an average interaction rate of 12,756.90, including likes, shares and comments. In this category, the museum restorers explain their work, such as in the post "Why do we take x-rays of works of art?"(https://bit.ly/3DDIDwR). In this manner, little by little, TikTok users who follow the Prado National Museum discover and find out about the museum staff and their work, in this case in the area of restoration. These videos easily manage to capture the attention of users, since they concern processes that are generally not well known by the general public, are very painstaking and delicate, and at the same time are performed on priceless works of historical importance. In this category are also videos with the same purpose, but with the peculiarity that instead of having original audio with the explanation, they use music from the TikTok platform itself to accompany the video on the topic of restoration.

The category "events", which considers the content that is generated within the context of international days celebrating specific themes or celebrations organized by the museum itself, includes nine posts. The videos in this category use all three possible audio types: that belonging to the platform (on two occasions), original audio (in three posts) and music from the museum (in four of the videos). One

example of content in this "events" category are the posts referring to the rehearsal by dancer Eduardo Guerrero to celebrate international tourism day (https://bit.ly/2Ykuuoj) and also that celebrating Gay Pride Day (https://bit.ly/3mpxlQP), with a duration of 18 and 12 seconds, respectively.

In terms of other topics addressed in this study, mention should be made of the "promotional" topic, which consists of six videos. The videos in this category, the duration of which averages around 20 seconds, is intended to show works or places in the museum accompanied by music provided by the TikTok platform, or original music from the Prado National Museum, with the intent of capturing the attention of users. One example of this is the first post made by the museum on TikTok, entitled "Discover The Garden of Earthly Delights by Bosco" (https://bit.ly/3yw5Z3S).

In other videos, museum employees answer questions asked by followers. These are grouped in the "questions" category. In this case, there are five videos that constitute a relatively recent action (the first was posted on March 2, 2021). All the videos that answer questions follow the same pattern (Table 2). In videos with an average duration of between 50 and 60 seconds, museum staff in the foreground answer questions asked previously by followers (an image of the question can be seen in the top left margin), explaining their work at the museum. Besides answering the question clearly and concisely, there are frequently little humorous touches to the explanation. This format is quite attractive to the museum's followers, considering that it scores an average of 17,354 interactions per video, making it the second highest ranking category, as can be seen in Figure 2.

Table 2: Example of short video content in the "questions" category

Example of a video in the "questions" category:
Why do we take x-rays of the works?

URL del video: https://bit.ly/38yilbG
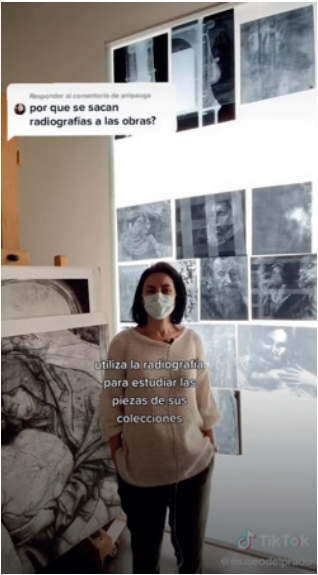
Source: author's own work.

Finally, the "work at the museum" category refers to posts related to technical work performed by museum staff, and it includes only two videos of 42 seconds each. One example of this content is the video entitled "How is the color of an exhibition chosen?"(https://bit.ly/3mtaBoO).

4.2.3. Hashtags

Each video is indexed by means of *hashtags* or labels creating narrative structures focused on themes. In the 107 videos analyzed, there are 386 hashtags, some of which are repeated many different times. If we consider the intensity with which these hashtags are used, measuring the repetition of use, the threads on #art, in several languages, #learnwithTikTok and #pradomuseum stand out, as can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Word cloud with the hashtags most commonly used in the analyzed posts

Source: author's own work

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Based on the foregoing, there is little doubt that museums play a vital role in the economy and tourism, constituting a significant unit of cultural tourism.

Increasing competition, technological advances and the need to reorient the offering towards customer needs have forced museums to offer new experiences based on educational and entertainment activities, as well as to redefine their communication and brand strategies (Belenioti, Tsourvakas & Vassiliadis, 2017). Furthermore, the proliferation of mobile applications to share short videos, like TikTok, has led to new forms of entertainment and information exchange practices that are increasingly used by both society in general, and by businesses (Majdouline, Jiang & Alireza, 2020).

In this sense, and with the aim of capturing the attention of a young audience accustomed to using electronic devices and the social media, museums have virtualized their offering, allowing educational activities to be diversified and optimizing services with increasingly more specific information (González, 2016).

The results of this research show that the Prado National Museum is working in different directions, demonstrating its concern to connect with issues and circumstances in the society in which it belongs, and attempting to reconfigure and enrich its brand strategy in order to reach different audiences, taking into consideration how they have changed the content consumption habits on different platforms.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on museum activity has spurred the expansion of the human resources dedicated to managing relationships with their audiences, as shown by the increase in the staff in charge of managing the social networks under the communication and networks department. However, it will be necessary to update this research at a later date, in order to determine whether the increase by one or two people in social network platform management is enough of a commitment to boost the digital channels that connect the museum to a society that is diverse and constantly evolving in terms of content consumption, in the context of the new normal following COVID.

The brand strategy implemented by the museum has effectively integrated the ongoing scheduled production of short video content by launching its official profile on the TikTok platform. The narrative structure and the language used are consistently adapted to the audience and the platform with rigor and respect, using an informal register in order to transmit knowledge without failing to connect in the most efficient manner with the social network's pattern of consumption.

The constant indexing of the content through the use of categories and hashtags allows the Prado National Museum to build and establish narrative threads on topics that are constantly present in their dissemination efforts and that, over the course of time, mean compiling valuable content repositories providing context to its audience and serving as a historical record of the museum in terms of the evolution of its collection, for example.

This case study serves as a window revealing the current situation at the Prado National Museum, which is taking steps to find new paths and formulas to connect with younger audiences on those platforms where current data indicate that they are consuming content.

Limitations of the research

Having presented the research, it follows that the limitations should be indicated that were encountered as it was carried out, which have conditioned both its development and performance. One of the most relevant is the fact that it was not possible to conduct a study of the reception amongst the users that make up the audience of the Prado National Museum's official TikTok channel. The qualitative aspect of the methodology could also be improved by adding interviews with experts.

Specific contribution of each author

Contributions	
Concept and design of the work	Signature 1 and Signature 2
Documentary search	Signature 1 and Signature 2
Data collection	Signature 1 and Signature 2
Analysis and critical interpretation of the data	Signature 1, Signature 2, Signature 3 and Signature 4
Drafting, format, revision and version approval	Signature 1, Signature 2, Signature 3 and Signature 4

6. Acknowledgement

7. References

[1] Amanatidis, D.; Mylona, I.; Mamalis, S. y Kamenidou, I. E. (2020). Social media for cultural communication: A critical investigation of museums Instagram practices. *Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing (JTHSM)*, 6(2), 38-44. http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3836638

[2] Bautista, P. S.; de la Casa, J. M. H., y Ruiz, A. S. M. (2021). Análisis de la comunicación de empresas europeas y norteamericanas en TikTok. *aDResearch: Revista Internacional de Investigación en Comunicación*, 25, 106-123. http://dx.doi.org/10.7263/adresic-025-06

[3] Bell, J. (2004). *Como realizar um projecto de investigação*. Lisboa: Gradiva.

[4] Belenioti, Z. C.; Tsourvakas, G. & Vassiliadis, C. A. (2017). A report on museum branding literature. In *Strategic Innovative Marketing* (pp. 229-234). Springer, Cham.

[5] Belenioti, Z. C., Tsourvakas, G., y Vassiliadis, C. A. (2019). Do social media affect museums' brand equity? An exploratory qualitative study. In *Strategic innovative marketing and tourism* (pp. 533-540). Springer, Cham.

[6] Bramwell, B. y Lane, B. (2011). Critical research on the governance of tourism and sustainability. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 19(4 -5), 411-42. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2011.580586

[7] Budge, K. (2018). Visitors in immersive museum spaces and Instagram: Self, place-making, and play. *The Journal of Public Spac, 3*(3), 121-138. http://dx.doi.org/10.32891/jps.v3i3.534

[8] Buhalis, D.; López, E. P. & Martinez-Gonzalez, J. A. (2020). Influence of young consumers' external and internal variables on their e-loyalty to tourism sites. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 15, 100409. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2020.100409

[9] Colladon, A. F.; Grippa, F. & Innarella, R. (2020). Studying the association of online brand importance with museum visitors: An application of the semantic brand score. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 33, 100588. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.100588

[10] Cole, D. (2008). Museum marketing as a tool for survival and creativity: the mining museum perspective. *Museum management and curatorship, 23*(2), 177-192. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09647770701865576

[11] Coller, X. (2000). *Estudio de casos.* Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.

[12] Dakouan, C.; Benabdelouahed, R. & Anabir, H. (2019). Inbound marketing vs. outbound marketing: independent or complementary strategies. *Expert Journal of Marketing*, 7(1), 1-6. https://bit.ly/3k7QdYM

[13] Dal Falco; Federica & Stavros Vassos (2017). Museum experience design: A modern storytelling methodology. *The Design Journal*, *20*(1), 3975-3983. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14606925.2017.1352900

[14] Du Plessis, C. (2017). The role of content marketing in social media content communities. *Journal of Information Management*, *19*(1), 7. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajim.v19i1.866

[15] Du, X.; Liechty, T.; Santos, C. A. & Park, J. (2020). 'I want to record and share my wonderful journey': Chinese Millennials' production and sharing of short-form travel videos on TikTok or Douyin. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 1-13. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2020.1810212

[16] Forni, P. y Grande, P. D. (2020). Triangulación y métodos mixtos en las ciencias sociales contemporáneas. *Revista mexicana de sociología*, 82(1), 159-189. http://dx.doi.org/10.22201/iis.01882503p.2020.1.58064

[17] González, Y. (2016). *Museos y turismo cultural: tendencias en España y a nivel global*. Centro de Investigación, Divulgación e Innovación Turística de Ostelea (IDITUR). https://bit.ly/3DFGctU

[18] Gretzel, U.; Fuchs, M.; Baggio, R.; Hoepken, W.; Law, R.; Neidhardt, J. & Xiang, Z. (2020). e-Tourism beyond COVID-19: a call for transformative research. *Information Technology & Tourism*, 1. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s40558-020-00181-3

[19] Hernández-Méndez, J.; Muñoz-Leiva, F. & Sánchez-Fernández, J. (2015). The influence of e-word-of-mouth on travel decision-making: Consumer profiles. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *18*(11), 1001-1021. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2013.802764

[20] Jiménez, M. Á. S.; Alles, M. T. F. y Franco, J. J. M. T. (2018). Revisión teórica del marketing en los medios sociales: Antecedentes y estado de la cuestión. *Revista de Estudios Empresariales. Segunda época*, 1, 42-57. http://dx.doi.org/10.17561/ree.v2018n1.3

[21] Keller, K. L. (2009). Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment. *Journal of Marketing communications, 15*(2-3), 139-155. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13527260902757530

[22] Kylander, N. & Stone, C. (2012). *The role of brand in the nonprofit sector*. Stanford Social Innovation Review. https://doi.org/g4x2

[23] Lehnert, K.; Goupil, S. & Brand, P. (2020), Content and the customer: inbound ad strategies gain traction. *Journal of Business Strategy.* http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JBS-12-2019-0243

[24] Litvin, S. W.; Goldsmith, R. E., & Pan, B. (2008). Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. *Tourism Management*, *29*(3), 458-468. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2007.05.011

[25] Lord, B. (2002). Cultural tourism and museums. *LORD Cultural Resources Planning and Management Inc*. https://bit.ly/2Zs0yHo

[26] Lu, X. & Lu, Z. (2019). Fifteen seconds of fame: A qualitative study of Douyin, a short video sharing mobile application in China. In *International Conference on human-computer interaction* (pp. 233-244). Springer, Cham.

[27] Majdouline, M.; Jiang, Y. & Alireza, N. (2020). Video-Sharing Apps Business Models: TikTok Case Study. *International Journal of Innovation and Technology Management*, *17*(7). http://dx.doi.org/10.1142/S0219877020500509

[28] Mestanza, J. G. y Revilla, M. R. G. (2016). El turismo cultural en Málaga: Una apuesta por los museos. *International journal of scientific management and tourism*, 2(3), 121-135. http://dx.doi.org/

[29] Museo Nacional del Prado (12/03/2021). *Se cumple un año del cierre temporal del Museo Nacional del Prado*. https://bit.ly/3CwqK24

[30] Niemczyk, A. (2013). Cultural tourists: An attempt to classify them. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 5, 24-30. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2012.09.006

[31] Noble, H. & Heale, R. (2019). Triangulation in research, with examples. *Evidence-Based Nursing,* 22, 67-68. https://ebn.bmj.com/content/22/3/67.abstract

[32] Oliveira, T.; Araujo, B. & Tam, C. (2020). Why do people share their travel experiences on social media? *Tourism Management*, 78, 104041. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.104041

[33] Piñuel Raigada, J. L. (2002). Epistemología, metodología y técnicas del análisis de contenido. *Sociolinguistic Studies*, *3*(1), 1-42. https://bit.ly/3CkOvdv

[34] Prentice, R. (2001) Experiential Cultural Tourism: Museums & the Marketing of the New Romanticism of Evoked Authenticity. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, *19*(1), 5-26. https://doi.org/cmqnqs

[35] Rodner, V.; Preece, C. & Chang, Y. C. (2019). Country branding through the arts: The role of museums in positioning a nation on the global market. In *Museum Marketization* (pp. 170-187). London: Routledge.

[36] Roppola, T. (2013). *Designing for the museum visitor experience*. London: Routledge. http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203070284

[37] Ruiz, Ó. R. (2005). La triangulación como estrategia de investigación en ciencias sociales. *Revista madri+ d*, *31*(2). https://bit.ly/31gjSbH

[38] SensorTower (02/06/2020). *Top apps worldwide for May 2020 by Downloads*. https://bit.ly/3n0YpvZ

[39] Soegoto, E. S. & Simbolon, T. (2018). Inbound Marketing as a Strategy in Digital Advertising. In *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering*. https://bit.ly/3n0Yr75

[40] Statista (2021a). *COVID-19's impact on video consumption among Generation Z and Millennials worldwide as of October 2020, by video type*. https://bit.ly/3jFentE

[41] Statista (2021b). *Redes sociales con mayor crecimiento de usuarios activos mensuales a nivel mundial entre 2019 y 2021*. https://bit.ly/2WNCPjH

[42] Strauss, A. y Corbin, J. (2002). *Bases de la investigación cualitativa. Técnicas y procedimientos para desarrollar la teoría fundamentada*. Colombia: Contus.

[43] Su, Y. & Teng, W. (2018). Contemplating museums' service failure: Extracting the service quality dimensions of museums from negative on-line reviews. *Tourism Management*, 69, 214-222. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.06.020

[44] Su, Y.; Baker, B. J.; Doyle, J. P. & Yan, M. (2020). Fan engagement in 15 seconds: Athletes' relationship marketing during a pandemic via TikTok. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, *13*(3), 436-446. http://dx.doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.2020-0238

[45] Suárez-Álvarez, R. y García-Jiménez, A. (2021). Centennials en TikTok: tipología de vídeos. Análisis y comparativa España-Gran Bretaña por género, edad y nacionalidad. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 79, 1-22. http://dx.doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2021-1503

[46] TEA-AECOM. (2020). Museum Index 2019. https://bit.ly/2WStYNP

[47] UNWTO (2020). Tourism and Culture. https://bit.ly/3zGG2QC

[48] Vassiliadis, Chris A. & Zoe-Charis Belenioti. (2017). Museums & cultural heritage via social media: an integrated literature review. *Tourismos, 12*(3). https://bit.ly/2XVuDif

[49] Wall, A. & Spinuzzi, C. (2018). The art of selling-without-selling: Understanding the genre ecologies of content marketing. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *27*(2), 137-160. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2018.1425483

[50] Wang, Y. (2020). Humor and camera view on mobile short-form video apps influence user experience and technology-adoption intent, an example of TikTok (DouYin). *Computers in Human Behavior*, 110. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106373

[51] Yin, R. (1994). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

ABOUT / *ACERCA DE:*
Mediterranean Journal of Communication / *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación*

REVIEWERS BOARD VOL. 13, ISSUE 1 (2022)

The **reviewers board** consists of collaborators of recognised competence in the topics of every paper. Reviewers' selection is conducted according to the affinity, recognition and research background criteria on the topics of the paper to be reviewed. Female and male doctors are always selected. Sometimes, other highly recognised professionals in the field were involved. The *Mediterranean Journal of Communication* holds several types of **database** of different experts in the field. It is a requirement that the reviewer does not belong to the same institution as the author of the article to be reviewed. In addition, an attempt is made to avoid any conflict of interest.

The **reviewers' board duties** are to ensure the quality of manuscripts to be published in the journal and explain properly the evaluation decisions of the article. The editorial board conducts a tracking process of every reviewer establishing a **quality process** in the manuscripts review to ensure compliance with deadlines, maintenance of anonymity, explanation of the decisions and information for the author. Collaborations are certified annually after the review process. We express our gratitude to the collaborating reviewers for their rigorous and committed work. We highlight their didactical support concerning amendments to texts to be published in the journal. Their contributions are always valuable and highly appreciated by the authors. Some of them have collaborated in reviewing more than one text.

The reviewers of the current issue are presented as follows:

Dr. Leopoldo Abad. CEU San Pablo. España.

Dra. Natalia Abuín-Vences. Universidad Complutense de Madrid. España.

Dr. David Alameda García. Universidad Pontifica de Salamanca. España.

Dra. Nadia Alonso López. Universidad de Valencia. España.

Dra. Sagrario-Maria Bernad Conde. Universidad de Zaragoza. España.

Dra. María-Ángeles Blanco. Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. España.

Dra. Gema Bonales Daimiel. Universidad Complutense de Madrid. España.

Dra. Araceli Castelló-Martínez. Universidad de Alicante. España.

Dr. Rodrigo Cetina Presuel. Harvard University. EE.UU.

Dra. Carmen Costa Sánchez. Universidad de La Coruña. España.

Dra. Carmen Cristófol-Rodríguez. Universidad de Málaga. España. Dr. Rafael Cano Tenorio.

Dra. Cristina del-Pino Romero. Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. España.

Dra. Elena Fernández Blanco. Universidad Pontifica de Salamanca. España.

Dr. Daniel García Rosales. EALDE Business School. España.

Dra. Ana García-Arranz. Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. España.

D. Patricia Gascón Vera. Universidad de Zaragoza. España

Dra. Begoña Gómez-Nieto. Universidad internacional de La Rioja. España.

Dr. Rolando Guevara. Universidad Nacional Autónoma. México.

Dr. Jonathan Hardy. University of the Arts London. Reino Unido.

Dra. Tatiana Hidalgo-Marí. Universidad de Alicante. España.

Dr. Luis Mañas. Universidad Complutense de Madrid. España.

Dra. Carmen Marta-Lazo. Universidad de Zaragoza. España.

Dra. Noemí-Carmen Martín. Universidad de Valladolid. España.

Dra. María-Yolanda Martínez Solana. Universidad Complutense de Madrid. España.

Dra. Beatríz-del-Carmen Martínez-Isidoro.

Dr. Juan-Pablo Mateos Abarca. Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

Dra. Blanca Miguélez Juan. Universidad del País Vasco. España.

Dr. Miguel-Ángel Nicolás. Universidad de Murcia. España.

Dra. Marián Núñez Cansado. Universidad de Valladolid. España.

Dra. Patricia Núñez Gómez. Universidad Complutense de Madrid. España.

Patricia Palomares- Sánchez. Universidad de Alicante. España.

Dra. María-Pilar Pastor. Centro lingüístico - CEL ed ex Lettori. Italia.

Dra. Begoña Pérez Calle. Universidad de Zaragoza. España

Dr. Álvar Peris Blanes. Universidad de Valencia. España.

Dra. Marilé Pretel. CEU San Pablo. España.

Dra. Marina Ramos-Serrano. Universidad de Sevilla. España.

Dra. Celia Rangel. ESIC/ Universidad Complutense de Madrid. España.

Dra. Isabel Rodrigo-Martín. Universidad de Valladolid. España.

Dra. Esther Martínez-Pastor. Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. España.

Dra. María-del-Carmen Sánchez-Vizcaíno. Universidad de Bratislava. Eslovaquia.

Dr. Jesús Segarra-Saavedra. Universidad de Alicante. España.

Dra. Rebeca Suárez-Álvarez. Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. España.

Dra. Victoria Tur-Viñes. Universidad de Alicante. España.

QUALITY AND INDEXATIONS CRITERIA

The Mediterranean Journal of Communication / Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación is accepted in Scopus (2020) and included in the Emerging Source Citation Index (ESCI) of Clarivate from 2015, where the ranking ESCI of Comunicar Journal (2019) gives it 2nd position in Spain and 20th in the world under Communication category (Q1, IF: 0.730). It is a journal included in Dialnet Metrics (2018), 4th in Spain (Q1, 2018), 5th in Ibero-America REDIB (CSIC) ranking and 8th among 41 in Google Scholar Metrics in the field of Communication. It has the quality label of FECYT (2016-2019). According to the criteria by Aneca (National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation) in 2019 for Social Sciences in national accreditation processes for associate and full professors, the journal is on Level 2.

THE JOURNAL IN FIGURES

DATA OF THE PRESENT ISSUE (2022, VOL. 13, Nº 1):

Number or contributions received: 69 (only for articles in the Special issue and Miscellaneous sections).

Articles published: (31) 26 articles, 3 editorials and 2 reviews.

Articles rejected: 38.

Rejection rate (percentage of articles rejected over the total of papers received): 55,07%

Acceptance rate (percentage of articles accepted over the total of papers published): 44,93%.

Average waiting time: 68 days.

Percentage of research studies published (minimum 50%): 100%.

Percentage of studies financed by competitive public initiatives: 55%.

Average number of reviewers per paper: 2.5. When conflicting review reports were obtained, a third reviewer was called upon. Both external and internal reviewers are entailed.

REASONS FOR REJECTION:

Non-scientific structure and approach.

Plagiarism.

Lack of coincidence with the theme of the journal.

Previous publication in congress.

Simultaneous submission.

Published less than two years ago.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Total number of authors: 75.

Average co-authorship index (total no. of authors/no. of articles published): 2,4.

Co-authorship index: 1 author (22,5%), 2 authors (22,5%), 3 authors (45,2%) y 4 authors (9,7%).

Female authors: 49 (65,3%).

Male authors: 26 (34,7%).

Doctor authors: 70 (97,3%).

Non doctors: 5 (6,7%).

EDITORIAL INBREEDING:

Number of authors belong to the editorial or advisory board: 2 (2,7%).

Number of authors who do not belong to the editorial or advisory board (minimum 20%): 73 (99,3%).

INSTITUTIONAL INBREEDING:

Number of authors of the University of Alicante (maximum 20%): 2 (2,6%).

AUTHORS' INTERNATIONAL OPENNESS:

Number of non-Spanish authors: 7 (9,3%). México (2), Colombia (1), Francia (1), Portugal (1), Lituania (1), Ecuador (1).

Number of Spanish authors: 68 (90,7%).

SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY PARTNERS

SCIENTIFIC TRANSFER

Mundo Digital Collection

Raymond Colle

Comunicación y Conocimiento:
Desafíos de la era digital
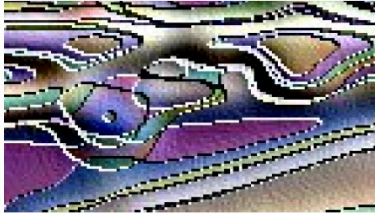
Colección Mundo Digital / 1

Revista
MEDITERRÁNEA
de Comunicación

1

Daniel Barredo Ibáñez   **Martín Oller Alonso**

Género, ideología y prensa digital
La construcción informativa del Día Internacional de la Mujer Trabajadora en www.abc.es y www.elpais.com (2001 – 2010)

Colección Mundo Digital / 2

Revista
MEDITERRÁNEA
de Comunicación

Sonia González Molina, João Canavilhas, Miguel Carvajal Prieto, Claudia Lerma Noriega y Tania Cobos Cobos

Hacia el Periodismo Móvil

Colección Mundo Digital / 3

Mediterránea
Mediterranean Journal of Communication   ISSN 1989-872X

Comunicaciones
iberoamericanas

1

Raymond Colle

La revolución de la "fonofotografía"
(Teléfonos con cámara y redes sociales)

Colección Mundo Digital / 4

Mediterránea
Mediterranean Journal of Communication   ISSN 1989-872X

Comunicaciones
iberoamericanas

1

Raymond Colle, Francisco Campos, Joan Francesc Fondevila, Javier Bustos, Jaime Novoa
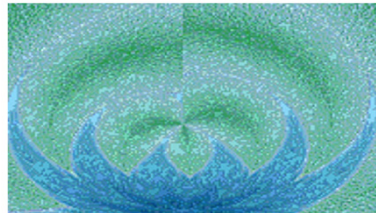
Estudios sobre la prensa digital iberoamericana

010101010101010101010101010101010101010101010
10101010101010 **CMD** 1010101010101010101
0101010101010 01010101010101010
1010101010101010101010101010101010101010101010101

Colección Mundo Digital / 5

Mediterránea
Mediterranean Journal of Communication ISSN 1989-872X

Eva Herrero, Fátima Ramos, Gema Alcolea, Javier Bustos, Martha Cé Romero

Las redes sociales y sus roles
Algunas experiencias

01010101010101010101010101010101010101010101010101010
1010101010101010 **CMD** 1010101010101010101
0101010101010101 010101010101010101010
101010101010101010101010101010101010101010101010101010

Colección Mundo Digital / 6

Mediterránea
Mediterranean Journal of Communication ISSN 1989-872X

1

Actas
V Encuentro Internacional de Investigadores en Publicidad
(RELAIP)

Ingrid Zacipa-Infante, Victoria Tur-Viñes y Jesús Segarra-Saavedra (Coords.)

Colección Mundo Digital
de Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación

7

Tendencias publicitarias en Iberoamérica
Diálogo de saberes y experiencias

Ingrid Zacipa-Infante, Victoria Tur-Viñes y Jesús Segarra-Saavedra (Coords.)

Colección Mundo Digital
de Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación

8

Algoritmos, grandes datos e inteligencia en la red

Una visión crítica

Raymond Colle

Colección Mundo Digital
de Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación

9

Diálogos bilaterales **Bilateral dialogues**
entre investigadores de la Glasgow between researchers from Glasgow
Caledonian University (Reino Unido) y la Caledonian University (United Kingdom)
Universidad de Alicante (España). and University of Alicante (Spain).
Estudios interdisciplinares Interdisciplinary studies

Irene García-Medina y Victoria Tur-Viñes (Coords.)

Colección Mundo Digital
de Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación

10

Actas de las Jornadas Científicas Internacionales sobre
Análisis del discurso
en un **entorno transmedia**

Coordinado por Jesús Segarra-Saavedra,
Tatiana Hidalgo-Marí y Raúl Rodríguez-Ferrándiz

Colección Mundo Digital
de Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación

11

Creative Industries Global Conference

Libro de Actas/Proceeding Book

Victoria Tur-Viñes, Irene García-Medina
y Tatiana Hidalgo-Marí (Coords.)

Colección Mundo Digital
de Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación

12

Compromiso y educación.
Redefinición del aula como contexto de aprendizaje

Coordinado por Daiana-Yamila Rigo

Colección Mundo Digital
de Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación

13

Libro de resúmenes
del I CINCOMA (Congreso Internacional de Innovación
en Comunicación y Medios Audiovisuales)

Coordinado por Tatiana Hidalgo-Marí,
Javier Herrero-Gutiérrez y
Jesús Segarra-Saavedra

Colección Mundo Digital
de Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación

14

La innovación docente a debate.
Aplicaciones en torno a la Comunicación Audiovisual,
Publicidad, Relaciones Públicas y Periodismo

Coordinado por Javier Herrero-Gutiérrez,
Jesús Segarra-Saavedra y Tatiana Hidalgo-Marí

Colección Mundo Digital
de Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación

15

**Nuevas audiencias,
consumidores y
culturas digitales**

Coordinado por Antonio García-Jiménez,
Daniel Barredo-Ibáñez y
Mágda Rodrigues-da-Cunha

Colección Mundo Digital
de Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación

16

Libro de resúmenes del
II CINCOMA

Congreso Internacional de Innovación en Comunicación y Medios Audiovisuales

Coordinado por Tatiana Hidalgo-Marí,
Javier Herrero-Gutiérrez y
Jesús Segarra-Saavedra

17

Colección Mundo Digital
de Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación

Comunicación en cuarentena:
el cambio mediático en pandemia

Coordinado por Javier Herrero-Gutiérrez,
Tatiana Hidalgo-Marí
y Alejandro Bernabéu-Serrano

18

Colección Mundo Digital
de Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación

Scopus®

CLARIVATE ANALYTICS
EMERGING
SOURCES
CITATION
INDEX
INDEXED

2021 CALIDAD
REVISTAS
CIENTÍFICAS
ESPAÑOLAS