


Chapter 7

Brands and Stories in Ads: The Relationship Between Storytelling and Brand Distinctiveness

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ABSTRACT

Storytelling in advertising allows consumers to recall the narrative, characters, and brands related to the story. This consolidates the consumer's idea of a brand as unique and distinct from others and can also be the basis for brand distinctiveness. As such, the present chapter will firstly take into consideration the existing theoretical framework related to the use of storytelling in the creation of narrative ads, and then it will present the creation, unfolding and results of an investigation involving 326 individuals. The data collected from this study demonstrates that the structure of the narrative of a storytelling ad positively influences the distinctiveness of the brand. Moreover, this study shows the mediating role between narrative structure and the perception of brand distinctiveness. This chapter enhances knowledge on advertising, narrative, and brand distinctiveness and supports new researches in this field.

INTRODUCTION

Human memory is based on stories (Woodside, 2010), they have attracted people since the beginning of time and are the most common way for human beings to communicate (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019).

Storytelling facilitates the processing of information by individuals and develops high levels of recollection when it comes to the narrative, characters and brands associated with the story (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019). The use of storytelling by companies aims to develop strong brands based on narratives (Donzé & Wubs, 2019) in order for the ideas, concepts and connections to the narrative to develop brand associations (Carnevale, Yucel-Aybat & Kachersky, 2018). As consumers create a social relationship

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between the narrator and his audiences (Pera & Viglia, 2016), stories are more easily remembered than facts and the other actions of a brand (Lundqvist et al., 2013).

The best way to convince someone is to tell a good story, as there is a lot of information to tell, but the stories also arouse the audience's emotions and energy. However, persuading with the right story is difficult (Woodside, 2010). Stories imply some essential elements that the storyteller must include in his or her production: cognition, emotion and behavior (Pera & Viglia, 2016).

Consumers are led to reflect upon and understand the signs, and the scenario always becomes a unique scenario, leading the consumer to understand the history and the brand associated with it as unique and distinct from other brands (Carroll, 2009). This use of visual cues can currently be most effective when the goal is to create impressions rather than convey meaning. Brands that care about giving meaning to their stories achieve greater levels of engagement with the messages they convey (Carroll, 2009).

When consumers try to interpret a storytelling ad, they combine the information received with existing personal and narrative representations (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019). Advertising is essential to create brand meaning, endowing brands with symbolic values and incorporating them into their broader socio-cultural context. It seems evident that brands use storytelling to express their image, mainly through symbolism, rhetoric and narrative (Gurzki, Schlatter & Woisetschläger, 2019).

The ease with which an ad is understood can reinforce existing consumer beliefs, so advertising is essential to create brand meaning, endowing brands with symbolic values and incorporating them into their broader socio-cultural context (Gurzki et al., 2019). Stories about brands that satisfy consumers could influence the consumer's brand experience, through the feelings and behaviors that are evoked by brand-related incentives (Carroll, 2009; Dessart & Pitardi, 2019).

Thus, due to the difficulty in obtaining differentiation and a distinct image as brands compete for the abstract discourses that appear, multiple routes of interpretation emerge (Gurzki et al., 2019). So it is our goal to present in this chapter a systematic review of the literature around the study already carried out and whose focus was the connection between storytelling and brand distinctiveness. Furthermore, through a quantitative analysis we will show that the structure of the narrative of a storytelling ad positively influences the distinctiveness of the brand.

BACKGROUND: ADVERTISING

Advertising has been used for decades as an effective communication tool. This is the result of the evolution of a traditional broadcast system for a multi-platform communication system (Knoll, 2016). In this system, creativity assumes the main role. Some authors (Ogilvy, 1995; El-Murad & West, 2004; Sasser & Koslow, 2008) recognized creativity as the most important concept in the development of effective advertising. Creativity is defined as something different, divergent and with novelty (Smith & Yang, 2004), as well as something which is relevant to the audience (Ang, Lee, & Leong, 2007; Smith et al., 2008). Creative ads capture the attention of the audience and deliver the message more effectively (Gibson, 1996). The creativity associated with novelty, meaningfulness, and connectedness increases the brand's likability, as well as the recall (Ang et al. 2014), the awareness and the favourable attitudes toward the ad and brand (Yang & Smith, 2009). These authors also argue that creative ads reduced individuals' resistance to persuasion and generated positive attitudes when it came to the brand and their purchase intentions.

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