



Chapter 7

Branded Content and New Persuasive Strategies in the Age of AI


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ABSTRACT

Branded content has evolved as a strategy to create content that resonates with consumers without triggering the rejection commonly associated with traditional advertising. In its recent campaigns, the IKEA brand has embraced this strategy, even incorporating artificial intelligence. This chapter explores how the brand is using branded content in its campaigns and the specific elements of artificial intelligence it is employing. Through a case study of the brand and an analysis of each of its campaigns, it is observed that branded content generates authentic and relevant content that connects with a wide audience, enhances the customer experience, and positions the company as a leader in sustainability, although the impact of AI on the strategy remains yet to be measurably determined.

INTRODUCTION

Advertising communication, a key element of the consumer society, is one of the most significant cultural phenomena today (Rodríguez Martín, 2021) and is defined by its ubiquity and its tendency towards digital. As a type of persuasive communication whose reference point is a product or service and whose character is commercial in pursuing its contracting or sale, it is a communicative discipline

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that faces, in this first quarter of the 21st century, important challenges in capturing the attention of the audiences to whom it is directed (Anzuátegui Macías, 2021). The notion of target or objective audience, relative to a group of people who at a sociodemographic and interest level identifies with the brand that is the object of advertising, becomes an imperative in the planning of any marketing and commercial communication strategy. Its definition allows brands to reduce costs, time and effort, choosing the most appropriate communication and channels and improving brand engagement. In this sense, advertising creativity is a key element for adapting messages to audiences of products and services and achieving effectiveness (Martín-García & Alvarado-López, 2022). As Martí Parreño et al. (2012) stated more than a decade ago, the macroenvironmental factors that surround us “are forcing the agents involved in the advertising sector to undertake new paths and strategies with which to more effectively achieve their objectives” (Martí Parreño et al., 2012, p. 327). The advertising industry and its agents evolve, focusing on measuring and improving results to increase their productivity (Puro Marketing, 2018). On the other hand, and as a result of its dynamism, advertising activity follows the trends that prevail in the context in which it is confined (Metricool, 2021), at the same time that it is committed to innovation when planning its campaigns to offer brands a whole world of creative possibilities (Pérez, 2021). This innovation is therefore key to business success and implies the ability to adapt to changes in trends, technologies and content preferences. As Bravo (2021) points out, creativity and innovation make the difference when it comes to working brand recognition and increased sales.

Thus, firstly, the current digitalized social and cultural environment presents as a distinctive characteristic a high penetration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and its tools (Martínez Domínguez, 2018). These outline a communicative landscape with an undisputed prominence of digital platforms and their large-scale application at all levels of knowledge and sectors of activity (IAB Spain, 2024): industry, economy, consumption, education, tourism, etc. In Spain, and according to data from the IAB Spain 2024 Social Network Study, 86% of Internet users aged 12 to 74 use social networks, which represents a total of 30.5 million users. Its impact is such that it is even compared to historical events of enormous significance such as the invention of writing or the printing press (Balart Carmona & Cortés Fuentealba, 2018), which marked a watershed in the development of humanity.

From the specific point of view of communication, the current scenario derived from the implementation of ICT “disrupts the models of traditional media” (Campos Freire, 2008, p. 277), changing both, the way of thinking of communications professionals and “the dynamics of knowledge production from physical environments to virtual spaces” (Hasbún Samboy, 2015, p. 1). The communicative context is characterised by factors such as audience fragmentation (Polo López, 2017), advertising atomization (El Publicista, 2021), language convergence (Berto & Mestre Silva, 2017) and information glut (Parra-Medina & Álvarez -Cervera, 2021), among others. Rather than information saturation, we speak of infoxication, understood as an information overload that is difficult to process motivated by the high volume of existing information (Ramos, 2022). This abundance of information can also be transferred to the advertising field, where the continuous growth of digital media, increased competition for consumer interest and the constant development of new advertising technologies coexist (Puro Marketing, 2024). In this way, advertising is forced to innovate more than ever, to survive infoxication, the saturation of stimuli and the high number of spaces in which to display its advertisements (La Vanguardia, 2020). These are conditions that present advertising activity with the need to develop communication strategies with which to attract recipients increasingly immersed in a context of hyperconnectivity, interactivity and immediacy. These circumstances have led to a major change in our society that has an impact “on the interaction of people in both personal and professional or academic environments” (Valle-Peris, 2022,

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