

# Brand Management: From Storytelling to Strategic Narratives



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**Abstract** Strategic brand management presupposes the use of different strategies. The dimensions. In this theoretical chapter, the authors analyze how the most known concepts are related. As a result, brand equity plays a great importance in brand image and brand identity, implying different approaches in the communication process of brands. Consequently, storytelling plays a specific role in brand communications, especially digital storytelling. Creating appropriate narratives, brands can improve customer engagement, consumer's emotional involvement and loyalty.

**Keywords** Branding · Brand equity · Brand image and identity · Storytelling · Narratives · Customer involvement · Consumer's memory · Digital marketing

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Branding

Brands play important functions for both companies and consumers. According to the American Marketing Association (AMA 2022) the brand is defined as “a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's a goods or service as distinct from those or other sellers”, without forgetting that the main purpose is the differentiation. As a result, branding is a major concept in the marketing literature because it is one of the most valuable intangible assets of companies [75].

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According to Olins [113], branding is a complex, versatile and multidisciplinary management activity that allows companies to improve brand reputation and brand awareness. It can also strengthen consumer involvement with products, which, in turn, improves to attract and retain customers [86, 122].

Aaker [5] discusses the internal brand and the external brand as important functions in developing a brand. Internal brand emphasizes increasing creativity among employees, showing positive impacts on both stakeholders. It also allows to share brand values. The external brand, on the other hand, is focused on the consumer.

Currently, the branding process includes primary elements of the brand such as visual identity, nomenclature, slogan, or positioning. In this context, developing a Storytelling (ST) provides consumers with a new and more positive experience. When strategically developed, ST improves the relationship between customers and brands, increasing customer loyalty [9, 56].

## 1.2 Brand Equity

Brand Equity (BE) became popular in the 1980s. Several authors such as Aaker [5], Feldwick [47] and Keller [73] defined BE based on different perspectives, as well as its impact on companies' financial performance [38]. Another perspective focuses on BE through the consumer's lens, highlighting the possible positive perceptions created by BE [6, 73, 116, 154]. Aaker [2, p.68] defined BE as:

A set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, name, and symbol, which are added to or subtracted from the value provided by a product or service to a company. For certain assets and liabilities to determine brand equity, they must be linked to the name and/or symbol of the brand. If the brand name or symbol is changed, some or all the assets could be affected, and even lost.

Aaker [6] developed a BE model based on five dimensions: (i) brand awareness, (ii) perceived quality; (iii) positive associations caused by the brand; (iv) consumer loyalty to the brand; (v) other assets of the brand. The first four components are directly related to the consumer and the last dimension concerns the financial value of assets that create exclusivity and competitive advantage, such as patents and trademarks. Figure 1 illustrates each of these five dimensions, providing a detailed explanation.

However, Keller [73] developed the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, providing a framework that incorporates the role of consumers' knowledge and feedback. Keller defines it as "the differentiating effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to brand marketing" [73, p. 14]. In the CBBE model presented by Keller, four steps are presented to develop a brand (branding goals) as follows:

1. Define a brand identity, that is, establish a certain breadth and depth of brand awareness.
2. Create appropriate meaning for the brand through strong, favorable, and unique associations.

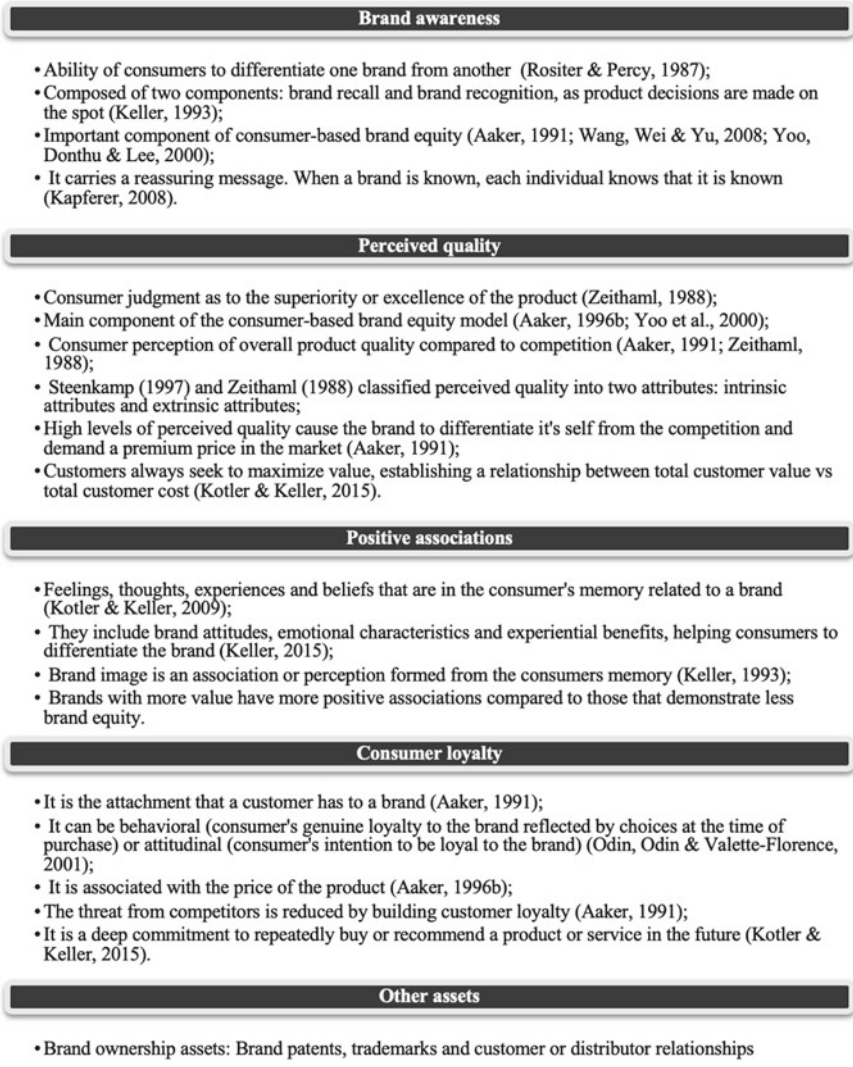
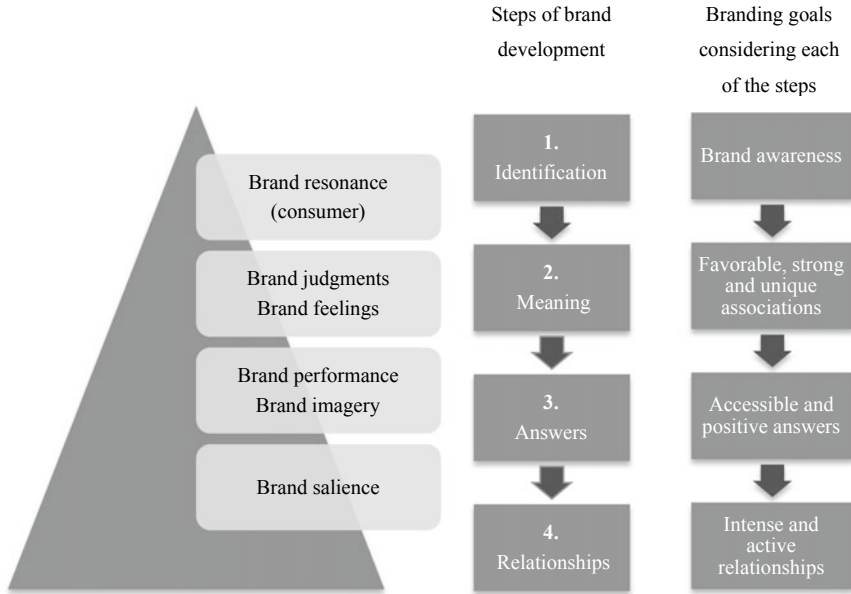


Fig. 1 Brand equity model adapted from [6]

3. Challenge brand responses that are positive and favorable.
4. Generate relationships with consumers, investing in intense and constant loyalty.

To accomplish those four stages, it is necessary to develop the six building blocks of a brand: salience, performance, imagery, judgments, feelings and, finally, the resonance that the brand causes in the consumer [76]. Brand awareness is not just related with specific facts of the brand, but also about the thoughts, feelings, perceptions,



**Fig. 2** Model CBBE adapted from Kapferer (2009)

images, experiences and everything that connects the brand to consumers mind [74]. Figure 2 summarizes, all of Keller’s thinking.

Also related with BE, Keller and Machado [77] refer that a key element in brand development is the choice of brand signs. This BE strategy influences the perception of consumers, such as price sensitivity.

According to Kotler and Keller, BE is the added value on products of a certain brand, reflected in the way consumers think, feel and act in relation to the brand. Furthermore, the greater this value, the greater its impact on the way consumers think, feel and act in relation to the brand. Still, the perception of this value will also have a direct impact on prices, market share and even the profit of companies. In this sense, BE is an important intangible asset that adds psychological and financial value to brands.

Brands with strong BE have important benefits, such as consumer loyalty and greater market share [78]. Therefore, BE is a concept of great relevance within the universe of brands, however, there is still a certain lack of consensus around the concept (Wood 2000). Further developments are crucial as brands with a high levels of BE are stronger [52], as well as the relationship between BE and customer engagement [114].

### 1.3 From Brand Image to Brand Identity

According to Kotler (1993, p. 269), brand image (BI) is “the set of beliefs about a particular brand” and it is developed during the process of decoding the six dimensions of the brand identity [65, 130]. It is also reflected by brand associations kept in the consumers’ memory, thus influencing purchase decision making [73]. These associations can be classified into three types, such as, attributes, benefits, and attitudes.

Elements such as brand personality play a relevant role in the development of brand image since consumers prefer a certain similarity between their own personality and the attributes of the brand’s personality. In other words, consumers prefer brands that match their self-image [20, 93]. However, according to Brito [24], the image will not only depend on its identity signs, but also on the brand positioning, combining preferences, strength and exclusivity of the associations developed.

In consequence, transmitting a brand image to a target market is key [117]. Because changes in brand image are not instantaneous, they occur over time. Instead, the value of a brand progressively adjusts to match its real value of exclusivity or similarity [84].

According to Malik et al. [93] there are two perspectives: the perceived image, which corresponds to the way consumers interpret a certain brand, positioning themselves on the receiver’s side and the desired image, which represents how the organization intends to position the brand, so that it corresponds to the image perceived by consumers referring to the brand identity. The brand image is passive and focused on the past, in contrast to the brand identity, which is more active, projecting the future [1, 71]. So, the search for a balance between identity and image is complex [129].

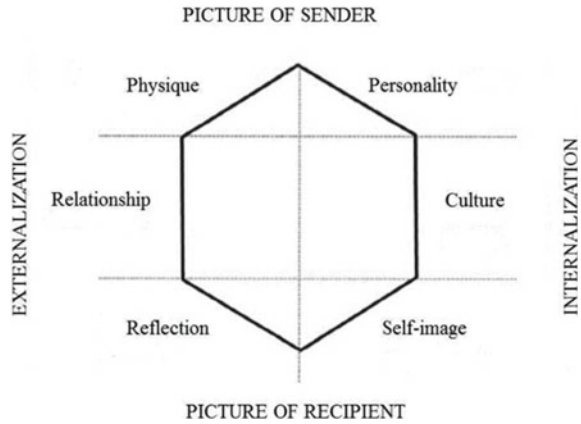
Meanwhile, some authors merge both concepts—identity and brand image—suggesting that the process by which an image is developed in the minds of consumers comes from the way in which the identity is developed and shared.

Kapferer [71, p. 171] defines brand identity as “the set of beliefs of the brand and its core values”. Identity must be unique, timeless, consistent, coherent, and adaptable, composed by the brand’s own identity, with a purpose and meaning [3].

But a successful brand identity also needs to fulfill three functions: be in agreement with consumers, differentiate the brand from competitors, and match what the company can and will do over time [47]. Accordingly, companies should establish the personality of the product and the value proposition, promote this personality, including emotional involvement.

In this context, Kapferer [70] presents a model based on a sender-receiver relationship between brands and consumers. The first assumption is that brands send and develop the brand identity, developing the “Brand Identity Prism”. This model is composed by six dimensions, divided in two dimensions: horizontal and vertical. The horizontal axis presents the elements corresponding to the sender and receiver, as well as the intersection between them. Subsequently, in the vertical axis, the social

**Fig. 3** The Brand Identity Prism from [70]



or observable elements are visualized, divided by externalization (physical, relationship and reflection) and internationalization (personality, culture, and self-image). Figure 3 illustrates the “Brand Identity Prism”.

The strategic management of those elements will determine the success of brands. The congruence between the brand identity and the brand image is critical to develop positive associations [43].

#### **1.4 Marketing Communication**

Integrated marketing communications has evolved over the last years. Keller’s CBBE model [73] is a good example of how a mix communication platform can increase brand awareness. The traditional advertising approach is being replaced by digital options.

Traditionally, communication was unidirectional, opposing to the current multi-directional and interactive nature of communication [63]. Additionally, current consumers are more informed and demanding. Therefore, companies need to use new forms of communication, sending messages that are increasingly customized [11, 13, 152]. Accordingly, the (marketing) communication mix includes eight main components: mass media, such as advertising, events, experiences and public relations, direct marketing, interactive marketing [15]. Word-of-mouth (WOW) and sales promotion are more personal types of communication.

Regarding marketing communication strategies, the narrative developed by brands stands out, combining literary narrative techniques and a narrative discourse. This strategy enables brands to communicate with stakeholders, highlighting the authenticity of brands [103]. Thus, storytelling plays an important role in brand communication aimed at consumers.

## 1.5 *Storytelling*

The process of telling stories is something that is inherent to the human being and it is considered one of the oldest arts. With the evolution of the world and the introduction of new technologies within society, turning human beings into authentic storytellers [59, 144]. Within the academic community, it has not been easy to find a universally accepted definition. There is a considerable confusion between “story” and “narrative”. Some authors consider that the concept “narrative” should be considered a synonymous of “history”.

According to Hyland [62, p. 1], a narrative “is a spoken or written account of connected events: a story”. Differently, Elçi & Çubukçuo (2014, p. 38) refer that “a synonym of the term narrative is history”, considering that they allow structuring experiences and knowledge. Other authors consider that the concepts are totally different, although related to each other [30, 141]. As a result, ST is perceived as an art from “a film, or an advertising campaign to commercial information or the presentation of a company”, sending a specific message, while involving and promoting audience participation [110, p. 20].

ST uses narratives for the organization’s communication involving customers [131]. ST presupposes a bidirectional interaction, written or oral, between someone who tells a story, and it is a well-known and powerful means of communicating messages and engaging the public [140, p. 1]. Stories are important as they appeal to different dimensions of consumers, emotions, intellect, body and will [142, p. 28].

In line with this reasoning, Xavier [150] presents three dimensions related to ST: pragmatic, pictorial and poetic. Pragmatics is the technique of elaborating and linking scenes, the pictorial art is the art of molding and putting together the pieces of a hypothetical puzzle; the poetics is the technique of building imaginary memories full of meanings. From another perspective [138] states that ST applied to brands is not like the narrative of cinema, i.e., a simple and functional structure is required, with a beginning, middle and an end that can be invoked from context, action and result, respectively.

When brands communicate clearly, immediate recognition is achieved (developing brand awareness), increasing emotional bonds with consumers [105]. In this context, authenticity plays a crucial role. From a brand strategy perspective, authenticity is a key element for successful brands, as it forms part of a unique brand identity [2]. However, the concept of brand authenticity is complex and multifaceted, since it is an assessment of the consumers’ perception of what they consider to be true or genuine, rather than being an objective and already consummated fact [50, 58]. If brands don’t reflect what they really are, they will be perceived as inauthentic brands [17]. As so, authenticity has been part of ST of brands as a way of brands producing appealing content. To this end, they develop narratives, with a properly structured and interconnected thread, with convincing characters. Simultaneously, they design their products in an engaging, attractive and effective way [146].

In order to appear authentic, the development of the brand story will have to be partially honest, that is, it does not need to be true word for word, the important

thing is that it seems credible and authentic in a merely sufficient measure [16]. Consequently, it will be the consumers to decide whether the story is perceived as authentic [61]. This perceived authenticity is key in ST [68, 91]. Additionally, consumers can be disappointed when they believe the story is totally true and later discover that it was made up and manipulated, a negative connotation that no brand wants to have, as it is easy to oversimplify the truth and distort everything else [127].

### **Storytelling as a branding strategy**

ST plays an important role in branding as the brand reflects all corporate and communication behaviors based essentially on the feedback of customers [54]. In fact, literature has long recognized the power of stories to provide brand meaning, and so professionals have decided to use ST to enhance consumer involvement [25, 57, 149].

ST can be a tool to create brand value, to create a clear and differentiated brand positioning, as well as an emotional bond between consumers and brands/products [98]. Additionally, when marketers only adopt and confront consumers with more quantitative facts and arguments, they end up creating more distance with consumers (e.g.: skepticism, loss of confidence) [14]. That is why it is common for stories to fascinate consumers, becoming thoughts and memories that are easy to retain, strengthening and increasing positive associations to brands, as well as increasing customer loyalty [54, 91]. So, the main intention is to create a bond and a genuine connection between brands and consumers. This can be achieved using universal archetypes<sup>1</sup> that, applied to the ST, are associated with heroic story patterns played by the characters within a narrative context, demonstrating all their characteristics, motivations, values, virtues and fears [27, 45, 133, 145].

The modern consumer is no longer guided by the same values as previously [92]. Well-positioned brands occupy specific niches in the minds of consumers and, therefore, in certain ways, are easily identifiable, similar and different compared to competing brands [79]. Pulligadda et al. [123] said that consumers who develop affective connections with the brand through stories show a greater tendency to share their experiences with others. As a result, they report that the loyal public is also more willing to spend a greater amount, if it is to develop their favorite brands.

### **Digital Storytelling**

Digital storytelling or Digital Storytelling (DS) was originally developed as a tool for community interaction, development and empowerment in the 1990s by Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley [33]. The attractiveness of this form of digital expression is underlined by the fact that these stories can be created by people anywhere, on any subject, and shared electronically across the world.

According to Jensen [67, p. 53] stories are “[...] statements of value, and the product is just an appendix to incorporate any story that is being sold”. This approach reflects the value that is given to stories and that in the digital context can also be applied. In this sense, Miller [102] defines DS as narrative entertainment that

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<sup>1</sup> Forms or images of a collective nature that represent a typical human experience, such as tales, myths, acts of heroism, among others.



reaches its audience through technology and social media, highlighting interactivity as something important in brands. This definition focuses the crucial and differentiating aspect of the DS that uses digital technology as a support and the possibility of sharing between the user and the content creator [8].

Joe Lambert, co-founder of the Center for Digital Storytelling, a non-profit arts organization in Berkeley, California, is known for developing and promoting the seven elements of digital storytelling that are an advantageous starting point for getting started with digital stories. The seven elements of digital storytelling, according to the founder are presented in Fig. 4.

Later, Lambert [88] updated the seven elements, maintaining and/or improving those that were already part of it, adding others that are equally important, such as: general objective of the story, the choice of content; voice clarity; narrative rhythm; quality of images, video and other multimedia elements; and still, good grammar and use of language.

Digital art consists of creating a short film, combining digital artefacts such as images, text, video clips, animation, and music, with a computer program as a technological base. Usually, they have a narration in the form of recorded audio, which

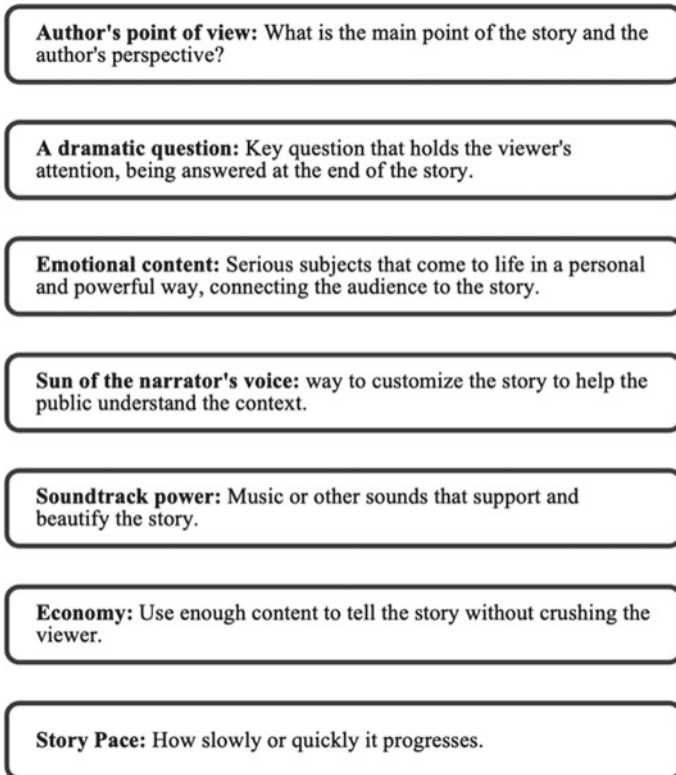


Fig. 4 The seven elements of digital storytelling from Lambert (1994)

ends up becoming an emotional element in the story. The digital history is saved in digital format, as the name means, to produce video files, if they are uploaded to the web. As is the case with traditional narrative, they contain a strong reflective, emotional and personal component, which implies that the story is quite succinct, usually lasting between three and five minutes [87]. This is because narratives generally revolve around an experience, incident or event called, sometimes, an inflection point, that is, the way the storyteller reflects and interprets the story in concrete, around their own life situation [64].

The strength of DS lies in its simplicity and, also in its accessibility, applying to both the creation and the understanding of stories. The focus is not on technical elements, but on the combination of narrative, audio, and visual elements. Nevertheless, consumers choose to learn about a product/service through videos and not only consider this type of content a form of entertainment given its multimedia capacity [108, 125]. Furthermore, selecting audiovisual elements stimulates creativity and metaphorical thinking, leading to audience engagement and the emotional response [32].

On the other hand, DS is often used as a learning and capacity building tool, promoting critical thinking, reflection and improving writing skills, as well as strengthening relationships between participants and/or vulnerable groups [32, 33]. In the digital world, the ST has played a very important role because, nowadays, people tend to understand better the message that is intended to be transmitted through these media, since the mind already tends to convert reality into stories, making it easier to introduce and to fit into people's minds, so that they can become memorable [100].

The ST has been generally used in the marketing of companies, with the objective of trying to unite and attach consumers to characters and brands, in order to develop business possibilities [115]. However, the impact of ST is difficult to circumscribe, that is, it is inevitable to say that stories enrich content marketing, in addition to humanizing the products themselves through the relationship with customers. According to the Content Marketing Institute, ST is not intended to be a sales tool, but a method of building strong relationships and empathy between the brand and its customers, or a loyal community over time, providing as a basis for content development.

Content Marketing is an innovative approach in the field of marketing, which combines social networks and the practice of narrative, that is, social networks have a communicational function on the internet and ST acts as an instrument for building relationships and interactions. Content that is supposed to be useful to the target audience must meet their interests and needs, as well as add value to the customer [143]. In addition, Hilker [55] defines that the content presented should be mainly informative, stimulating, inspiring and fun for customers, showing that the main characteristic is to add more to the brand, not focusing only on the facts and figures of a particular product. So, to create successful Content Marketing, the content must describe a problem that affects the target audience, followed by a solution to that same problem, which helps the customer to immediately identify with the brand [53].

According to Kartajaya and Setiawan [85] there are eight fundamental steps to help marketers to create an effective content marketing strategy, such as:

1. Definition of goals.
2. Mapping the target audience.
3. Content idealization and planning.
4. Creation of the content itself.
5. Distribution of content across the various platforms.
6. Expansion of content, for example, through well-known influencers.
7. Content Marketing Assessment, through strategic and tactical performance measures.
8. Improved Content Marketing.

In this sense, companies need to define which type of content best fits their goals. The content to be used can include articles, creating blogs, video and streaming platforms, social networks, email marketing, inbound marketing, newsletters, among others. It should be noted that, currently, the main social networks allow the recording and dissemination of videos created by users, called stories, emphasizing the real power of stories, in addition to consumers of stories, users are also the makers of their own stories.

Digital influencers also play a relevant role in DS because they are able to quickly spread messages to large online communities [22, 83]. This kind of content improves the brand awareness and credibility of brands, as well as the emotional bond with their followers [72].

The use of ST in social networks intends to stimulate emotional bonds and should impact, educate, intrigue and appeal to humor [94]. Therefore, the ST of brands should be based on the interests of their targets [115].

Another particularity of the digital environment focuses on the sharing of stories combined with visual elements. DS is very often related with Visual Storytelling (VS). As mentioned by Walter and Gioglio [, p. 7], “the rise of social media platforms such as Pinterest and Instagram, together with the multimillion-dollar acquisition of Facebook, ushered in an era in which the old adage, a picture is worth a thousand words, it is more relevant than ever.”

The DS is constantly being reinvented and improved and its purpose is an excellent platform that allows showing the human side of the brand [126]. Sharing online stories can occur on different platforms, i.e., Transmedia Storytelling (TS). Jenkins [66] defined TS as a process in which the elements of a fiction are systematically dispersed, through multiple channels and languages, to create an experience unique and coordinated, in which each medium has a unique contribution to history, influencing the production of communication content, as well as human behavior itself.

So, combining words and VS transforms simple narratives into interactive stories, increasing brand loyalty, generating trust and deeper connection with customers [126]. With the emergence of transmedia in the art of storytelling, Jenkins [66] developed the concept of Transmedia Marketing, aiming to emphasize the customer engagement dimension. Customer engagement tools are important to measure the

reach of communication efforts, such as likes, comments, or any other type of interaction, i.e., indicators of the success or failure of Marketing actions.

### **Advertising and Storytelling**

Marketing communications perform multiple functions and are built in an increasingly challenging environment. The reality of social media has suffered drastic changes and for this reason, brand managers must alternate their communication options to build the BE, that is, choose through a variety of media, if they share common meaning and content, but at the same time differentiate themselves, with complementary advantages [36, 107, 106].

Advertising is considered the combination of information and persuasion techniques and activities and it is characterized as a hybrid form of communication (objective and subjective information) intended to influence the opinions, attitudes, feelings, behaviors and perceptions of the target audience [112].

Using the ST format in advertising texts, as a way of supporting the consumer's connection to the brand, has proved to be extremely effective [Kaufman 2003]. Advertising texts, in this format, can transform information into a condensed and memorable message [7]. This strategy can enable the promotion of social reflections and discussions of consumer interest, thus adding value to the brand [89]. Therefore, stories could inspire and empathically involve the receiver, as well as giving the brand a voice of its own.

However, Escalas emphasizes the positive effect and mental excitement evoked by the stories. Such as Polyorat et al. [121] who corroborate this theory, stating that the ability of stories derives from the mental stimulation of advertising consumption that resides in the way the consumer processes it in terms of decision making. On the other hand, ST is considered an activity and an integral part of what distinguishes us as human beings, especially in a consumerist environment [29].

According to some studies, individuals interpret and they imagine themselves as characters in the story and attribute meaning to them, which indicates that there is a relationship between the narrative and its association with emotional and WOW responses [69]. When consumers understand an ST ad, this interpretation is based on personal information linked to the representations, made by the characters, in the narrative [35]. Naturally, emotions compete a relevant role, providing high levels of consumer involvement [23]. And, therefore, advertisements combine the stories they want to tell with the experiences of consumers, generating positive emotions, leading them to share among themselves.

## **2 Narrative Construction**

It is important to know what makes a strategic story. So, first we must understand what the narrative means. The term narrative has currently reached the height of its popularity in the social sciences. Assuming that, before starting the process of creating a narrative, it is necessary to identify the components that are essential to it,

Message	Conflict	Characters	Plot
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refers to the central premise or theme throughout the story;</li> <li>• Edeological or moral statement, being expressed metaphorically (Abbott, 2008; McKee &amp; Gerace, 2018);</li> <li>• The story's message does not necessarily need to be happy to induce favorable consumer reactions (Carnevale, Yucel-Aybat &amp; Kachersky, 2018).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rupture of harmony and subsequent difficulties that main characters face (Abbott, 2008; McKee &amp; Gerace, 2018);</li> <li>• It is the driving force of a story (Aaker, 2018, Fog et al, 2010);</li> <li>• Although Woodside et al. (2008) state that a good brand story should include incidents that create tension in the audience, Fog et al. (2010) requires a careful balance between harmony and chaos.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent human or human-like entities that are involved in actions or events(Abbott, 2008);</li> <li>• A protagonist and an antagonist can be present as main characters(Dessart, 2018; Fog et al.,2010);</li> <li>• Sympathy and character identification are key to facilitating emotional connections with the audience (Dessart,2018; Mar, Oatley, Djikic &amp; Mullins, 2011).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is the causality chair that links the events of a story together (Abbott, 2008; Fog et al.,2010);</li> <li>• It determines how the events of a story unfold, but also provides meaning to the story (Dessart, 2018);</li> <li>• Without a plot, there would be no correlation between the conflict, the characters or the message of a story(Aaker, 2018);</li> <li>• It is concerned with the sequence of events: beginning, middle and end (Booker, 2006).</li> </ul>

Fig. 5 Narrative elements

how to define the target audience (segmentation) and the content of the narrative. On the other hand, there are several elements that integrate the creation of the narrative world, including the message, conflict, characters, and plot, presented in Fig. 5.

As a result, brand stories should contain a plot and character elements, in addition to missing any authorship intention, such as a purpose, moral, message or lesson based on a particular context. Taking this in mind, narratives are said to be constructive as they fit into a typical story that includes a collection of interrelated episodes that usually describe sequences of human action. So, narrative thinking must be structured and context sensitive, that is, where individuals end up processing the information received as if they were creating a story, fitting characters and episodes into a narrative envelope, giving meaning to the world and to their lives [12]. Those stories consist of action-result sequences goal-directed, which create responses in the characters, whether physical and/or psychological [118]. As a result of these responses, the characters develop goals that lead to action sequences, which result in certain outcomes, being able to make evaluations and incite judgments when building these same stories [46, 119].

So, the structure of the narrative is composed of two elements, chronology, and causality. First, when talking about chronology, it refers to a certain temporal dimension, something that occurs over time. That is, the human perception of the meaning

of time is accommodated through episodes, but it is an undifferentiated and continuous flow. Therefore, the universal goal of narrative thinking is to achieve the closure of the story, by framing these episodes with a beginning, middle and end [81, 120]. In this way, the real interest occurs when the temporal order of events is clear. It is at this point that the story begins to “make sense”.

Second, throughout the narrative, elements and structures are developed, according to the organization, to establish relationships and connections between the narrative elements. For example, first the protagonist feels jealous, next he kills his rival [37].

When developing stories, individuals organize their experiences by creating an order to explain unusual events [26]. Events must be organized based on a chronological order, so that the episodes/moments have a relationship with the entire involvement of the narrative [120]. Gergen and Gergen [46] theorize that the dramatic involvement of a narrative depends on the evaluative inclination of the story, building high and low moments in the action itself.

The construction of the narrative is an excellent contribution in developing the brand identity, but it also proves to be a challenge for organizations because, not all ST examples present a narrative capable of connecting consumers [40, 92].

When creating a brand, the narrative should be the first element to be created and, therefore, starting with a strong, well-designed and quickly recognized personality will strengthen the dependence and coherence between companies' strategies and the perception of consumers [54].

## ***2.1 The Effect of Narrative on consumer's Memory***

Neuroscientists have analyzed the effect of narratives on people's brain. Results confirmed an important effect of the narratives [132]. According to Woodside et al. [149], at the individual level human memory is based on the tale. This means that memory is the first indication of the behavior of the storytelling act, in which information is stored and retrieved in the form of stories, sometimes reflecting the listeners/spectators' own lives. Thus, the stories end up awakening implicit and/or explicit awareness, increasing the creation of emotional connections of understanding in them.

According to Fischer [42], at a social level, stories make the lives of each one of us understandable among all. Going against this theory, Boje [19] adds that people end up telling these stories in a conscious way, portraying their own characteristics in the society in which they live. The main purpose of stories makes it clearer and easier to remember certain events that took place in social life, facilitating the transmission of knowledge to future generations [60].

Throughout this process, the associations transmitted by the story persuade the individual and become fixed in his memory, due to the similarities between consumers' thoughts and the narrative. This is consequence of the information received and the experiences lived by each individual, having as a final result,

persuasion, which results from the balance between the strong and weak arguments used.

Narratives can be considered an organizational structure that can enhance consistent memory [10, 147]. Narratives are remembered as abstractions or “skeletons of history”. That is, stories help trigger episodic memory, generating multiple associations, judgments and attitudes [135].

In line with this reasoning, a story is much easier to memorize than real and pure information, due to the fact that the human brain is programmed to search for and even retrieve stories that are attractive [149, 151]. The narrative appears to be theoretical and relevant, as it helps to recall the brand’s elements through episodic memory, providing consumers with maximum pleasure [149]. In this sense, stories can be responsible for the production of knowledge according to their own memorization capacity [153]. One of the basic memory structures techniques is creative memorization, in which each person’s imaginations can come to “come to life”, in the sense of connecting with something that makes sense, or that reminds them of something. For this, this author resorts a lot to the use of metaphor, as another of the learning techniques in this process, remembering that it is at this point that the real change can happen (Woodget and Channon 2020).

Due to the fact that stories are memorized in different ways, whether emotionally, visually or factually, they are reminiscent of the entire content of the story itself [91]. Due to this natural propensity to think and interpret the world through narrative thinking, this becomes the way of thinking that best captures and calls attention to human intention [37].

In the field of marketing, advertising recall is essential. So, it can be said that the more time the consumer dedicates his reasoning to a particular advertisement, the greater the probability that same advertisement will be retained in long-term memory. Or, on the other hand, when a consumer appreciates a product in a particular advertisement, he or she tries to obtain as much information about it as possible [134]. It is important to take into account the purpose of advertising, that is, if it is to obtain brand recognition, to remember the product/brand or if the consumer arrives at the purchase decision [104]. The literature indicates that the memory of a particular advertisement influences the behavior and, consequently, the consumer’s opinion, explaining why the message content and the advertising structure are key [134].

### 3 Conclusions

Very often, consumers involvement is considered a moderating effect of the consumers decision-making process, based on their needs, interests and values [18, 124]. Together with this involvement, there is a growing recognition of the role that emotions play in the building of brands [31, 51]. Stories are an effective way of providing an approximation to the consumer’s identity, which means that there is a connection between the consumer and the brand. Consumers exposed to a narrative

process are more emotionally connected and are able to identify and recognize themselves in the brand, impacting their own attitude towards it [91, 95]. Consumers are looking for experiences that appeal to their emotions and dreams, so stories support the reach of these experiences, increasing trust in the brand, as well as its recognition, awareness and uniqueness [91].

Organizations should create their own stories because narratives stimulate different emotions in consumers [49]. The use of ST allows for better interaction and integration of brand values compared to the more traditional forms of communication used by marketing [54, 109]. Furthermore, brands also provide sensory stimuli, invoking positive or negative feelings, playing with consumer's specific state of mind especially when they engage in an egocentric way with the brand [136]. In line with this perspective, Escalas and Herskovitz and Crystal [54] refer that ST positively strengthens emotional connections with brands.

As a result, emotional branding is primarily consumer-focused and characterized by relationship building, a story-driven approach that leads to deep emotional and affective promises between the consumer and the brand [128]. The affectivity created by the ST is perceived as a process with relevant opportunities to improve consumers' loyalty. So, affective involvement increases levels of commitment to the brand and, consequently, a willingness to pay a higher amount for the product [123].

Thus, the more inspiring and emotional the story told by brands, the greater the emotional connection established with the public [39]. Theoretically, the customer engagement and emotional reactions to brand narrative ads can be explained by two complementary mechanisms—narrative transport and empathy for the characters [96]. Narrative ads are generally more persuasive and remind more favorable cognitive and emotional responses than non-narrative ads [82]. The explanation for these events lies in the fact that human beings think in a narrative rather than an argumentative way [101]. In addition, due to the episodic nature of memory, consumers tend to remember stories better than facts or product features, which enhances brand recall [82, 90]. Narrative can help marketers to create emotional bonds between consumers and brands and, in this way, facilitate the resonance of the same [4, 149].

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