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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

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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.

Keywords

Branded content; Brand Story; advertising narrative; strategic planning, creativity

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 centrado 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.

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. |

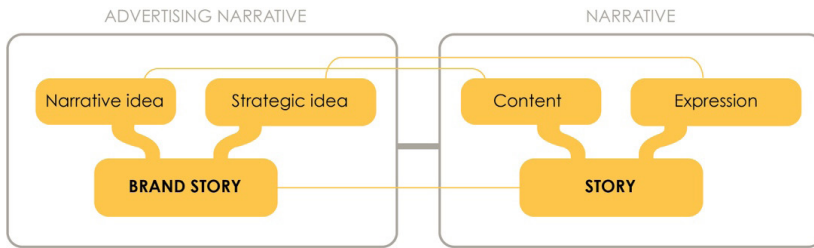
Source: Seymour Chatman (2013: 32).

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 diagram 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 high 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) referred to enunciation 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 <i>El País</i> (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: <i>A mi yo adolescente</i> 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. | <i>Aprendemos juntos</i> 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 | <i>Target and insight</i> | 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 juntos*'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 PAÍS* 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 |

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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).