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ARTICLE

“Once upon a brand”: Storytelling practices by Spanish brands[☆]



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Abstract We have all listened to and told stories. People are captivated by good stories since they have the power to translate us into new worlds and enable us to live the lives of others. In addition, our thoughts and emotions seem bound by the structure of stories. However, not only do consumers interpret their exposure to and experiences with brands through stories, but stories can persuade and strengthen the brand. Nowadays, companies are making efforts to build their brands through storytelling. After reviewing the concept of story and some of the impacts that arise from storytelling, this exploratory research analyses the use of this practice by Spanish companies from six different sectors. Content analysis is applied to identify differences among companies that use or do not use storytelling, and the characteristics and elements used in 104 stories from 247 websites are analyzed. Additionally, through a cluster analysis, four different groups of stories are identified. The results show the main objectives of the stories, the plots and the archetypes used, among other aspects. Nevertheless, storytelling is underused by most Spanish companies and there is room to increase the quality of stories. Managerial implications of these findings are also discussed.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Narrativas;
Marcas;
Comportamiento del
consumidor;
Comunicación

“Erase una vez una marca”: el uso de la narrativa por las marcas españolas

Resumen Todos hemos escuchado y contado historias. La gente es cautivada por las buenas historias pues tienen la capacidad de trasladarnos a sitios nuevos y hacernos vivir la vida de otros. Además, nuestros pensamientos y emociones parecen estar estructurados en forma de historias. Sin embargo, los consumidores no solo interpretan su exposición a las marcas y su experiencia con ellas a través de las historias, sino que las historias pueden persuadir y fortalecer la marca. Hoy en día, las empresas realizan enormes esfuerzos para construir su marca

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a través del uso de narrativas en sus actividades de comunicación. Este estudio exploratorio analiza el uso de esta práctica por parte de empresas españolas de seis sectores. El estudio usa el análisis de contenido para identificar diferencias entre las empresas que usan y las que no usan las historias, las características y elementos usados en las 104 historias analizadas de 247 sitios web. Además, a través de un análisis cluster se identifican 4 conglomerados. Entre otros aspectos, los resultados muestran los principales objetivos de las historias, las tramas y arquetipos usados. Sin embargo, se constata en general que la narrativa o el uso de historias como parte de la estrategia de comunicación está infrutilizada por parte de las empresas españolas y queda mucho por hacer para mejorar la calidad de las mismas. Las implicaciones empresariales de estos resultados también se ponen de manifiesto.

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"In 1835 the young Manuel Maria Gonzalez Angel used to take long walks with his uncle Jose Angel y Vargas for long walks in the old town of Jerez, when in the city the sound of the hooves of the horses could still be heard making their way through the streets. Manuel Maria found in his Uncle Pepe the best support to get started in the fascinating business of sherry. In those years, Jose Angel, Uncle Pepe, begin a very personal selection of casks in order to find the perfect wine... Years later, Manuel Maria Gonzalez Angel called this vintage 'Solera del Tío Pepe', and the inscription can still be read in one of the vintage casks. This is how the legend of the most famous sherry of Spain and the world began to be forged."

And the story continues to be written...

<http://www.gonzalezbyass.com/familia-del-vino/>

Introduction

People are exposed to stories throughout their lives from the moment of birth (Van Laer, Ruyter, Vsconti, & Wetzels, 2014), because stories are informally told all the time. From parents to children, from grandparents to grandchildren, from teachers to students; at bars, around campfires, and so on (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). Storytelling is a fundamental human activity because through it people are able to better understand their world and organize their experiences to communicate them to others (Cooper, Schembri, & Miller, 2010; Moore, 2012). Furthermore, reliving and repeating stories is inherently pleasurable to the teller and permits to experience an archetype fulfilment in their own story (e.g., being a hero, a lover, a rebel) (Woodside, Sood, & Miller, 2008). However, storytelling also plays a role in persuasion, because the best way to persuade someone is by telling a compelling story (Woodside, 2010).

This natural human process of people organizing their experiences through the construction of stories is also present in consumption contexts (Chiu, Hsieh, & Kuo, 2012). Researchers of a myriad academic fields – such as advertising, leadership and information processing – have studied how consumers interpret their exposure to and experiences with brands through stories. Furthermore, with the advent and popularity of social media (e.g., discussion forums, travel and consumer blogs, social platforms), consumers'

role in brand storytelling is more active than ever¹ (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012) and these stories can spread as rapidly as those created by companies, implying that brand owners no longer have complete control over their brands and the meanings of these brands (Henning-Thurau et al., 2010; Muñiz & Schau, 2007).

Whether created by consumers or by firms, storytelling has become a powerful communication tool that makes it possible to better differentiate the brand and to make sure that it is not just another commodity (Kaufman, 2003). As storytelling is used to bring brands to life and provide them with a personality, in the academic literature there is a strong belief about the benefits of storytelling to brands (Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus, & van Riel, 2013). Specifically, it has been proven to add favourable and unique brand associations, which in turn increase brand equity (Lundqvist et al., 2013); in addition, storytelling can better embrace the core brand values compared to traditional forms of marketing communication (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). It also strengthens emotional brand connections (Escalas, 2004; Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010), and has positive effects on brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Chiu et al., 2012).

As a consequence of the qualities inherent in stories, particularly their emotional and relational power, meaning-creating and memorable properties (Wachtman & Johnson, 2009), research efforts and interest in storytelling within the field of marketing, and especially in the branding literature, has increased during recent years,² such that storytelling has moved from being primarily used in advertising, to being viewed as an essential element in developing and managing the brand strategy.

Despite its benefits as a powerful form of communication (see Barker & Gower, 2010; Hegarty, 2011, p. 95; Smith,

¹ For instance, a search via Google for blogs by brand names (e.g., "Cola Cao") brings forth numerous blog entries of mundane reports of consuming Cola Cao. See, for example: <http://colacaomayo.blogspot.com.es/>, <http://dulcementenadia.blogspot.com.es/2014/09/cola-caoy-galletas.html>, <http://nonperfect.com/2012/12/11/cola-cao-con-azucar-por-supuesto/>).

² For example, the *Journal of Psychology & Marketing* devoted its June 2010 special issue to brand-consumer storytelling theory and research.

2011, p. 27), the fact is that stories remain a largely unconventional means of brand communication (Barker & Gower, 2010). In the III National Conference of Retail that took place in Barcelona in May 2015, it was highlighted that storytelling has arrived very late to Spain in the field of marketing. Thus, the objective of this research is to examine how storytelling is being used by Spanish brands. More specifically, the following research questions are formulated:

1. To what extent do Spanish brands of different sectors use storytelling when communicating?
2. How good are the brand stories communicated?
3. What kind of story elements do companies use?

The paper is structured as follows. Next, a literature review is conducted to analyze storytelling and provide an overview of its effects on consumers. Thereafter, the method used to analyze the contents of Spanish companies and brand stories is described. The paper concludes with a discussion of the results, managerial implications and research limitations.

Storytelling

The essence of stories

A story is “an oral or written performance involving two or more people interpreting past or anticipated experiences” (Boje, 1995, p. 1000). Bennet and Royle (2004, p. 55) defined stories as “series of events in a specific order, with a beginning, a middle and an end”.

Previous literature has highlighted the existence of several factors as prerequisites of a story. Specifically, Stern (1994b) identified three necessary elements of a story: chronology, causality and character development. Chronology means that a stimuli with a story content (e.g., advertisement) has an internal temporality; that is, a beginning, middle, and end. Causality highlights the temporal relationship between events: an initial event results in a response by a character, actions are undertaken to achieve goals, and these actions result in an outcome. Finally, character development pertains to viewers/readers being made aware of the psychological state of the protagonist; that is, what he or she is thinking and feeling. According to Deighton, Romer, and McQueen (1989), chronological sequence and central characters are essential in order to label something a story.

Thus, a brand story comprises a realistic or fictional framework in which brand can be embedded to convey something about the brand’s heritage, founder, highlights and crises, mission and values, and functional and emotional benefits (Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, 2005). The jewellery brand Tous may serve as an example here: on its homepage (<http://www.tous.com/es-es/>), a fictional story in which the brand is embedded is presented. In the story, the idea of unconditional love between a father and his daughter tries to communicate the inherent tenderness of the brand, based on a universal value that everyone can appreciate.

Apart from the three elements (e.g., chronology, causality and character development) that identify the existence of stimuli within a story, other researchers have detailed

specific brand story elements in communication (see Table 1 for a summary).

The literature has highlighted four elements that contribute to a good brand story (authenticity, conciseness, reversal and humour), although their effectiveness in influencing consumer attitudes depends on the product type (search versus experience). Specifically, Chiu et al. (2012) found that authenticity and reversal are more critical for experience products, while conciseness and humour exert a greater influence for search products.

From a managerial point of view, Denning (2006) suggested that there is no a single right way to tell a story, as the story pattern depends on the company’s objectives (see Table 1). For example, a story with a negative tone will generally fail to spark action but, by contrast, the typical tone of knowledge-sharing stories is about difficulties. Among relevant objectives is to use narrative with the purpose of satirizing untrue rumours or bad news, which can undermine a company’s reputation (“taming the grapevine”); this is one of the little-understood uses of stories (Denning, 2006).

As another element of a brand story, plots play a central role because they are an essential attribute that organize events into a beginning, a middle and an end. They help to order experiences and make them meaningful via a logical sequence (Stern, 1994a). As described in Table 1, Booker (2004) and Nudd (2012) identify seven basic master plots that provide an idea of what a brand story may be about.

Finally, the use of archetypes in the brand story helps connect with others (e.g., consumers), and also present products and brands, in a meaningful way. Archetypes are forms or images of a collective nature that represent a typical human experience (e.g., acts of heroism) and define the personality of a brand and give it a voice to express its story to the consumer. Table 1 describes 12 archetypal forms as proposed by Megehee and Woodside (2010).

The persuasive effects of stories at a consumer level

Storytelling is one of the oldest and most powerful modes of communication (Kaufman, 2003; Worth, 2008), not only because from childhood we are used to reading, listening and telling stories but also because stories are more easily remembered (Lundqvist et al., 2013), more affective and more convincing compared to rational arguments, statistics or facts (Kaufman, 2003). Furthermore, at an individual level, human memory is story-based because information is indexed, stored and retrieved in the form of stories (Schank, 1999), and, at a social level, stories make our lives intelligible to others since they have a beginning, a middle and an end (Fischer, 1985).

Due to the pervasiveness of stories at an individual and social level, it is unsurprising that, in the field of consumer research, academics have adopted a narrative perspective as an interpretative tool for the way people structure and process their consumption experiences and make judgments (e.g., Adawal & Wyer, 1998; Escalas, 2004). For example, a narrative perspective is used in the services marketing literature (e.g. Stern, Thompson, & Arnold, 1998) to provide a better understanding of the service experience and identification of consumers’ perceptions of the service

Table 1 Brand story elements in communication.

	Description	Studies
<i>Elements of a good brand story</i>		
Authenticity	A sense that readers obtain from material that makes them believe and associate the story with reality.	Chiu et al. (2012), Deighton et al. (1989), Brown et al. (2003), Beverland, Lindgreen, and Vink (2008), Hollenbeck, Peter, and Zinkhan (2008), Guber (2007), Stern (1994b)
Conciseness	A story presents complete thoughts in as few words as possible, while still covering important points.	Chiu et al. (2012), Boozer, Wyld, and Grant (1990), Reinstein and Trebby (1997), Taylor, Fisher, and Dufresne (2002)
Reversal	This entails a climax and a turning point. At this point, the action and/or emotion either take a surprising twist or reach unexpected intensity.	Chiu et al. (2012), Deighton et al. (1989), Taylor et al. (2002)
Humour	This depends on whether the story uses puns, jokes, understatements, double entendres, or other methods. It gives rise to smiles and laughter exhibited by an audience in response to a message.	Chiu et al. (2012), Taylor et al. (2002), Zhang and Zinkhan (2006)
<i>Story objectives</i>		
Sparkling action	Getting consumers to buy in to a different way of doing things. Describes how a successful change was implemented in the past and allows listeners to imagine how such change might work in their situation.	Denning (2006)
Communicating who you are	Revealing some strength or vulnerability from your past to inspire and engage others.	
Sharing knowledge	Focusing on mistakes made and showing how they were corrected. The objective is to generate understanding rather than action.	
Transmitting values	Prompting discussion about the issues raised by the value being promoted.	
Taming the grapevine	Highlighting some aspect of a rumour that reveals it to be untrue or unreasonable.	
Leading people into the future	Preparing others for what lies ahead, or evokes the future you want to create.	
Communicating who the brand is	Enhancing the brand, usually with reference to the product or service itself, or by customer or credible third-party word of mouth.	
Fostering collaboration	Recounts a situation that audiences have also experienced and that prompts them to share their own stories about the topic.	
<i>Basic plots</i>		
Rags to riches	Rising from the ashes. At the beginning the protagonist (the consumer, the brand) is insignificant and dismissed by others, but something happens to elevate it, revealing it to be exceptional. Brands will often leverage their own story, or even a founder's story, within this theme.	Booker (2004), Nudd (2012)
Rebirth	Brands telling stories of renewal describe situations in which an important event forces the main character to change their ways, often making them a better person.	
The quest	A mission from point A to point B. The quest is about progression. A protagonist sets out to acquire an important object or to get to a location, facing many obstacles and temptations along the way.	
Overcoming the monster	There is an evil force threatening the protagonist who has to fight to overcome it. A brand using this plot makes the customer the hero, or the brand becomes the tool or weapon to overcome the monster.	
Tragedy	A story without a happy ending, which revolves around the dark side of humanity and the futile nature of human experience. It relies on a tragic flaw, moral weakness and/or deep suffering.	

Table 1 (Continued)

	Description	Studies
Comedy	A story with a happy or cheerful ending, in which the central motif is triumph over adverse circumstances, resulting in a successful or happy conclusion.	
Voyage and return	The protagonist goes to a strange land and, after overcoming the threats posed to him or her, returns with nothing but experience. This represents the progression from naivety to wisdom.	
<i>Archetypes (universally familiar character)</i>		
Ultimate strength	When an obstacle is encountered, it must be overcome; strength must be proven in use.	Megehee and Woodside (2010)
The siren	A character who cleverly uses his or her power of attraction and instincts to elicit certain responses in men. It becomes associated with a mystical brand of sexuality and pleasure.	
The hero	A character who is as strong and competent as possible and is able to prove his or her worth through courageous acts. Conveys expert mastery in a way that improves the world.	
The antihero	A character that breaks the rules to achieve his or her goal. The antihero is willing to participate in acts of mischief and cruelty to complete the task at hand. He or she has flaws that taint their purity.	
The creator	The creator fosters all imaginative endeavours and inspiration, from the highest art to the smallest innovation, in lifestyle or work. Embodies originality, creativity, imagination and self-creation.	
The change master	A character that is strongly intuitive and dedicated to making a difference through change. It represents transformation, self-improvement and the desire to be the master of our own destiny.	
The powerbroker	A character that is able to influence the decisions of other parties. Represents authority, influence and domination. Is "the best" or the "world leader".	
The wise old man	Experience, advice and heritage. Standing the test of time.	
The loyalist	The loyalist is a friend who embodies trust, loyalty and reassurance. He or she enables people to not feel alone and to move in the world with more confidence.	
The mother of goodness	Such a character may be represented as a fairy godmother who guides and directs a child. Represents purity, nourishment and motherly warmth.	
The little trickster	This character exhibits a great degree of intellect or secret knowledge, and uses this to disobey rules and conventional behaviour. It is used to persuade and seduce.	
The enigma	This character represents the universal messages of mystery, suspense and uncertainty.	

encounter. Furthermore, other studies have analyzed how consumers tell stories about their brand experiences through word of mouth (Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004; Moore, 2012).

Beyond its use as an interpretative methodology of consumers' intentions and behaviours, storytelling is also becoming a persuasive tool in the areas of advertising, communication, branding and management to connect with stakeholders of a company due to its potential effects on story receivers. For example, studies have explored the use of storytelling as a tool to affect stakeholders' perceptions of the corporate brand in order to differentiate it from competitors and build corporate brand reputation (Janssen, Van Dalen, Van Hoof, & Van Vuuren, 2012; Roper & Fill, 2012; Spear & Roper, 2013). Furthermore, authors have demonstrated the power of storytelling to strengthen the brand internally, as it can be used to engage employees and to

enhance fundraising or recruitment efforts (Fog et al., 2005; Kaufman, 2003). Recent research has also shed light on the importance of storytelling in personal selling. For example, Gilliam and Zablah (2013) explored the effect that different types of stories have on consumers' purchase intentions regarding onetime sales encounters. Gilliam and Flaherty's (2015) qualitative study found that salespeople use stories with the purpose of transferring information, establishing credibility, persuading and making buyers more comfortable and communicative.

Storytelling also has impacts on listeners in terms of affective responses, and critical and narrative thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and intentions, as described in a meta-analysis by Van Laer et al. (2014).

In a branding context, storytelling is also reaching a significant status in companies' brand-building efforts

and brand strategy communications in terms of persuading consumers and strengthening the brand externally. For example, from an emotional-branding perspective storytelling is viewed as the main brand strategy because only by telling stories that inspire and captivate consumers can brands forge strong and meaningful affective bonds (Escalas, 2004; Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010; Love, 2008; Morgan & Dennehy, 1997; Thompson, Rindfleisch, & Arsel, 2006).

Storytelling may also add more favourable and unique associations to the brand (Lundqvist et al., 2013). Specifically, Schmitt, Zarantonello, and Brakus (2009) showed that well-told stories regarding the origin of a brand appear to have the potential to influence how consumers think about the brand. Other studies have provided empirical evidence of how long-abandoned brands are revived and successfully relaunched or diversified over time, converting in retro brands, through storytelling (see Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry, 2003).

Additionally, storytelling can make a brand more convincing (Escalas, 2004) and memorable in multiple ways (visually, factually and emotionally), as consumers that are exposed to good brand stories have more extraordinary brand experiences (Mossberg, 2008). Furthermore, compared to regular advertisements, stories help consumers to better understand the benefits of the brand (Kaufman, 2003), and provoke less negative thoughts.

These persuasive effects of stories on cognitive and affective responses are well explained by narrative transportation theory. This theory proposes that when consumers are transported by (i.e., absorbed or immersed in) the story told, narrative processing predominates over analytical processing. Narrative processing results in less critical analysis of ad arguments, fewer negative thoughts and greater affective responses compared to analytical processing, which in turn enhance persuasion (Green & Brock, 2002). Other studies have elaborated further on this model to demonstrate that some preconditions need to be met for narrative transportation to occur. For example, Mazzocco, Green, Sasota, and Jones (2010) stated that transportation requires a certain level of effort and attention to the story, which not everyone is able to deliver. Recently, Van Laer et al. (2014) updated the model proposed by Green and Brock (2002) by including individual characteristics as antecedents of narrative transportation, such as the recipient's familiarity or personal experience with the story topic, their gender and their level of education.

Following our definition of what constitutes a story and its persuasive effects, we will now analyze whether Spanish brands have adopted this new strategy of communication, and if so, how good these stories are and what elements characterize them.

Method

Since the purpose of the current research is to explore the content of brand stories, a content analysis is performed. This is a common method in the analysis of communication messages (Bigné & Royo, 2013) and, in particular, with respect to Internet and website content, because of its flexible nature (Allen, 2014; Okazaki, 2004). Content analysis is described as an objective, systematic and quantitative

way of exploring information about communication content, and has been successfully used in previous studies on brand storytelling (e.g., Janssen et al., 2012; Spear & Roper, 2013).

Sampling frame and sample

An initial selection of Spanish companies and brands was drawn from a census from *El Foro de Marcas Renombradas Españolas* (<http://www.marcasrenombradas.com>). This consortium includes more than 100 companies and brands from a broad range of industries, which is important as brand stories may differ according to the industry in which the brand operates. In this research, we focus on companies and brands belonging to six different sectors: (1) food and beverage, (2) fashion and habitat, (3) communication and sports, (4) professional and business services, (5) technology and infrastructure and (6) other sectors. We analyzed the companies' group websites and also those of the individual brand with a link to the group's website. These resulted in a list of 247 websites of 189 individual brands (see Appendix A.1).

Brand stories were identified from those presented on the official website of each brand because, as an important image-building tool for companies, websites are a constantly available source of information for company's consumers and other stakeholders (Connolly-Ahern & Broadway, 2007). Moreover, if the website had a link to its own YouTube channel, information on this channel was analyzed as part of the website.

Content variables

Stories were located and screened by two independent coders trained by the authors. The coders were instructed to identify stories that met Stern's (1994b) criteria; that is, they had to include chronology, causality and character development. Additionally, some examples of what does and does not constitute a story were provided to the coders (see Appendix A.2).

As a result, 104 stories were identified. These were each read and coded by two additional coders along a variety of dimensions. First, primarily for identification purposes, the following items were coded: brand name, sector, and specific action, since some of the brands had more than one story. Second, once the stories had been read, content variables were coded. These variables answered questions such as *how*, *where*, *who* and *what*. Based on Van Laer et al. (2014), we distinguished different formats (*how*): text, image, sound or combinations of them (sound and image, image and text, text and sound or all three). *Where* the stories were placed was coded by differentiating among ads, blogs, website and packaging. *Who* was telling the story was initially coded using two categories: the company and the customers. Based on Denning (2006), Lundqvist et al. (2013), Singh and Sonnenburg (2012), Vedder (2015), a list of four different categories was used to identify *what* the story was about, such as the product, customers using the product, the company, the brand or employees. Additionally, other characteristics were identified to describe the content of the stories, including their tone (positive, negative or neutral), the type of content (functional, emotional or both), whether

the stories were real and also the variables mentioned in Table 1. In terms of tone, based on Roznowski (2003), the stories were coded as positive when they reported only favourable aspects, while negative stories were seen as consisting of unpleasant or unfavourable aspects, and neutral when neither favourable nor unfavourable aspects were included. Categorization of the type of content as functional or emotional is related to the appeals used in the story. While functional appeals focus on the logical and rational decision making of consumers with respect to the brand's qualities, emotional appeals stir up favourable feelings towards the brand. Finally, based on our own criteria, brand stories were also classified as fictitious or real depending on whether they were genuine/authentic or imaginary.

Coder reliability

When the research has an exploratory nature, past research (see Allen, 2014; Gregory, 2014; Parson, 2013) has used the authors as the coders. Thus, in this phase of the present study, the authors coded the characteristics of the story previously identified by the two independent coders, as they had no interest in finding specific conclusions regarding the content characteristics of the stories, or any hypotheses to test.

A coding scheme with detailed descriptions and examples of each variable to be coded was used (see Appendix A.3). After pilot-coding five stories of different brands, possible problems were discussed. This resulted in modifications to the coding scheme and application of rules. The authors realized that stories could be told not only by the company or customers, but also by other people or collaborators, such as bloggers or professionals that share and can transmit the company's values.

In the context of Denning's (2006) classification of story objectives, the difference between "communicating who you are" and "communicating who the brand is" objectives is not definitive, and could overlap in some cases. Therefore, it was decided that the objective of a company telling its history would be seen as intended to "communicate who the company is", while other stories aimed at enhancing the brand would be considered as belonging to "communicating who the brand is". In addition, a new objective was added since some stories by consumers and collaborators did not fall into any of the categories suggested by Denning (2006). This was named "customer's objective".

With respect to archetype, in some stories it is possible to identify as many archetypes as characters. However, we decided to focus on the main character or protagonist of the story. Additionally, Megehee and Woodside's (2010) definition of the antihero was considered too narrow, as it would not include traditional Spanish antiheroes such as Don Quixote or the Lazarillo de Tormes. The antihero is not always a bad person, but may just be a character who does not have the extraordinary qualities of the hero; for instance, the antihero may be ugly, mean, cowardly, etc. Finally, an additional classification, "bittersweet", was included in the tone categories. A bittersweet story is one that is both pleasant and painful or regretful.

After completion of the assessment sheet, reliability testing was conducted between the two coders and

inter-coder reliability was calculated. There is little agreement on which way of estimating intercoder reliability is the best (Bigné & Royo, 2013). However, Cohen's Kappa coefficient is widely extended and preferred over per cent agreement (e.g., the number of agreement scores divided by the total number of scores) because it accounts for the possibility that raters have actually guessed about at least some variables due to uncertainty (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). Like other correlation statistics, Cohen's Kappa can range from -1 to $+1$, and indicates intercoder agreement for categorical scales when there are two coders. Cohen's Kappa coefficient for intercoder reliability or agreement was found to be 0.921. According to Lombard et al. (2002), a 0.70 coefficient is acceptable.

After analysing the percentage agreements, all the disagreements between coders were solved by discussion to provide a single answer (Nacar & Burnaz, 2011). Existing answers were then replaced with these new ones. The final database, with no disagreements, was used to conduct the following analyses.

Analysis and results

To examine how storytelling is being used by Spanish companies and brands, the following analyses were performed: frequency analyses, contingency tables, chi-square analyses and cluster analysis. More specifically, a descriptive analysis was conducted to understand (1) to what extent Spanish brands use storytelling when communicating, (2) what they communicate and how they tell the story and (3) what kind of elements they use.

Finally, a cluster analysis was conducted to classify the stories and identify natural groups of stories that shared certain characteristics that we would otherwise not have been able to detect. To group the stories, we used as variables the four characteristics of a good story proposed by Chiu et al. (2012) and the total number of these characteristics that each story included. Each identified group is also described in terms of the specific characteristics of each story (what the story is about, type of archetype, type of plot and so on), as depicted in Appendix A.3.

Description analysis and differences between brands and stories

Storytelling was found to be a relatively unpopular form of communication, as only 47 (25%) of the 189 Spanish companies and brands analyzed use it. Specifically, 104 brand stories were identified and significant differences were found across sectors ($\chi^2_{(5)} = 61,539$, $p < 0.00$). As depicted in Table 2, storytelling practices differ across types of sectors. The food and beverage sector appears to be slightly more prone to using storytelling because it accounted for 58.6% of the stories identified (61 out of 104). Particularly products such as alcoholic drinks or dry feeding represents more than a half of the 104 stories analyzed (see Table 3). By contrast, the communication and sports and technology and infrastructure sectors rarely utilize storytelling (Table 2).

Across the 37 types of products and services commercialized by the companies and brands analyzed, we also observe significant differences in the use of storytelling

Table 2 Brand websites that use storytelling according to type of sector.

	Sector						
	Food and beverage	Fashion and habitat	Comm. and sports	Other sectors	Professional business srv.	Technology and infrast.	Total
<i>Use of storytelling</i>							
No	24	42	24	20	15	18	143
Yes	61	26	0	9	7	1	104
Total	85	68	24	29	22	19	247

Table 3 Brand stories across types of product/service.

Product classification	Use of storytelling	
	No	Yes
Non-alcoholic drinks	4	1
Alcoholic drinks	13	36
Dried food, conserves and oils	7	19
Fresh products	0	5
All other kinds of products (retailing)	2	2
Beauty products	1	1
Perfumes	0	11
Textile	28	2
Shoes	3	2
Jewellery	1	8
Health services and opticians	3	2
Financial services	4	7
Constructor (naval or materials) and restoration and rehabilitation of buildings	4	1
Paper	2	7

($\chi^2_{(36)} = 136.44$, $p < 0.00$). Table 3 shows how the 104 brand stories identified are distributed across products and services. Higher proportions of stories were identified in alcoholic drinks (34.6%), dried food, conserves and oils (18.26%) and perfumes (10.57%).

An examination of the 104 observed stories revealed some interesting facts. Most of the companies and brands used videos (45.2%) or a combination of text and images (42.3%) to tell stories. Although many of them had links to blogs on their websites, very few used blogs for storytelling (just 9.6% of the stories were located on blogs), as the vast majority (56.7%) were located on other sections of the website and 33.7% of the stories were located in ads. With respect to who was telling the stories, most (72.1%) were told by the company itself, followed by collaborators (17.3%) and customers (10.6%).

Table 5 Elements that contribute to a good story.

Elements of a good story	%	No. of elements in the story	%
Authenticity	78.8	None	3.8
Conciseness	58.7	One	45.2
Reversal	10.6	Two	42.3
Humour	10.6	Three	5.8
		Four	2.9

Our inspection of the stories' topics contributes to our understanding of the role of storytelling. We identified five topics (the product and its benefits or characteristics, customers using the product or their relation with the brand/company, the company, employees, and the brand) and the use of functional and emotional aspects. As Table 4 shows, the most popular topic was the brand (43.3%) while least popular was employees (4.8%). Interestingly, some stories were not related to any of the five topics (13.46%). These were stories that may have been interesting to the company's target market, such as recipes or stories, as seen on Dulcesol's Sweet Life blog.

With respect to the functional and emotional aspects of the stories, most (76%) had an emotional component, while the functional aspects were less used (41.3%). Again, some stories (22.11%) managed to integrate both aspects.

The main purpose of telling stories was found to be to communicate who the brand (34.6%) or the company (27.9%) is. Transmitting values (15.4%) and consumers' own stories (14.4%) were also relevant.

Companies tell stories, but not all stories are of the same quality. Chiu et al.'s (2012) four elements of a good brand story were not always present in the stories of the Spanish brands analyzed. Only three stories (2.8%) included all four elements. As Table 5 shows, while authenticity was quite common (78.8%) while conciseness, reversal and humour were almost nonexistent. Additionally, we analyzed how many elements of a good brand story the brand stories had.

Table 4 Popular topics of the stories.

	Product (%)	Customers (%)	Company (%)	Employees (%)	Brand (%)
<i>Story focus</i>					
No	66.3	64.4	70.2	95.2	56.7
Yes	32.7	35.6	29.8	4.8	43.3

Table 6 Types of plots and archetypes identified in the stories.

Is there a Plot?		Is there an Archetype?	
No	57.7%	No	14.4%
Yes	41.3%	Yes	84.6%
Plots	%	Archetypes	%
Rags to riches	5.9	Ultimate strength	6.7
Rebirth	29.4	The siren	7.8
The quest	23.5	The hero	11.1
Overcoming the monster	3.9	The antihero	5.6
Comedy	17.6	The creator	41.1
Voyage and return	3.9	The change master	11.1
		The wise old man	5.6
		The loyalist	1.1
		The mother of goodness	3.3
		The little trickster	3.3
		The enigma	2.2

Table 7 Other characteristics of the stories.

Tone of the story (%)		Nature of the story (%)	
Positive	92.3	Real	64.4
Neutral	5.8	Imaginary	35.6
Bittersweet	1.9		

As expected, most contained one or two elements; surprisingly, some stories had none (3.8%).

Commercial stories are narratives that may have a plot, and whose characters may be archetypal. From Table 6, it can be observed that there is no single way of telling stories. The majority of the stories analyzed did not have a clear-cut plot, and the most-used plot was that of rebirth, which describes a past situation of the company/brand followed by narration of a search phase, a solution and finally a new situation. The quest plot was also quite common.

The use of archetype was found to be very frequent (84.6%). The creator was found to be one of the most commonly used archetype as brands and collaborators adopted it to convey how they dealt with difficulties to realize their projects (see Table 6). For example, Licor43 combined the creator and the change master archetypes in almost all its stories. In these stories, people revealed how they had changed their lives by creating their own companies, following their dreams and, in most cases, leaving their previous jobs.

Table 7 summarizes the results observed regarding the other characteristics.

Cluster analysis

We followed the procedure recommended by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (1999) to identify clusters when both categorical and continuous variables are used in the analysis.

To identify different groups of stories across the websites, we used scores derived from the codification of five variables: the four elements of a good brand story – authenticity,

conciseness, reversal and humour (which are categorical) – and the sum of the aforementioned characteristics that each story has (which is a continuous variable). Therefore, a two-step cluster model was used to define the clusters. This model can be used to cluster the dataset into distinct groups when those groups are not previously known. The clustering algorithm is based on a distance measure that gives the best results if all variables are independent, if continuous variables have a normal distribution and if categorical variables have a multinomial distribution. However, the algorithm is thought to behave reasonably well even when these assumptions are not met. This analysis does not involve hypothesis testing and calculation of observed significance levels. The model has two steps: (1) preclustering and (2) hierarchical clustering of preclusters. The analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 20.0. The results suggested a good quality and the presence of four clusters. To quantify the “goodness” of the cluster solution, the silhouette coefficient, which is a measure of both cohesion and separation, was used. The silhouette measures range from -1 to $+1$. In our analysis, this coefficient was found to be 0.80. Fig. 1 shows the variables in increasing order of importance.

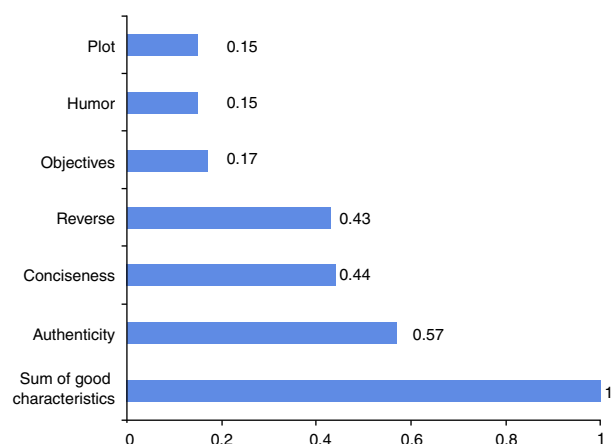
**Figure 1** Variable importance in cluster solution.

Table 8 Story clusters.

	Cluster 1: Silver stories	Cluster 2: Cherry-picker stories	Cluster 3: Slight stories	Cluster 4: Golden stories
Size	37.5% (39)	30.8% (32)	22.1% (23)	9.6% (10)
Authenticity	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Conciseness	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Reversal	No	No	No	Yes
Humour	No	No	No	Both
Average characteristics of a good story	2	1.0	1.0	3.2
Emotional aspects	Both	Yes	Yes	Yes
Presence of plot	No	Both	Both	Yes
Presence of archetype	Both	Yes	Yes	Yes
Story is real	Yes	Yes	No	Both

Additionally, we used other characteristics of the stories to better describe each group and to identify whether good (or bad) stories had any characteristics in common. Based on the variables from which they were derived, the four clusters can be described as shown in Table 8.

Cluster 1: Silver stories. This was the first cluster in terms of size. These stories were authentic and concise, but lacked the reversal and humour elements. This group mixed both real and imaginary stories and functional and emotional aspects. The stories within this cluster could be in any format and had no plot. With respect to the archetype, while some did not have any archetype at all, “the creator” was the most common archetype used (50% of the stories had this archetype). In this and the other clusters, the topic of the story could be anything (the company, brand, employees or customers), and the stories could be told by anyone (company, customer or collaborators). The objective of these stories was found to be quite diverse. Examples are Cola Cao’s “El Cola Cao de...” set of ads (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhJwnSKnvsg>), stories from blogs such as that of Nadia Murillo linked to the webpage of Dulcesol (see <http://dulcemenadenadia.blogspot.com.es/2015/09/cupcakes-minions.html>) or company histories such as those presented by Mar de Frades, Gallo, Marqués de Cáceres and Villa Massa.

Cluster 2: Cherry-picker stories. This was the second largest group of stories. These stories lacked of conciseness, reversal or humour, but narrated realistic events. Such stories are easy to elaborate, but it was found that no extra efforts had been made in our sample to improve the stories by making them more concise or to adding humour. The fact that they were based real events could explain why, while containing an archetype, they lacked a plot. The topic of the story could be anything (company, brand, employees or customers), and the stories could be told by anyone (company, customer or collaborators). These stories had emotional aspects and usually tried to communicate who the company is, the brand and the brand’s values. Some of the stories comprised videos about customers, such as that used by Santander (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VA8E12ooJo>) and Licor43 (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pe5b7CEnt4s>).

Cluster 3: Slight stories. This cluster was the third largest. It included stories that were concise, but lacked authenticity, reversal or humour.³ The objectives of these stories were to transmit values or communicate who the brand is. Most did not have a plot, but did have an archetype. All of these stories were told by the company, and we found both emotional and imaginary examples. In fact, most of these stories were ads, such as Nina L’eau by Nina Ricci (see https://youtu.be/tUrCrXpdP_0). Other examples of stories in this category include those used by La Tita Rivera in promoting the company’s drinks (cider, wine, and so on), which used both text and image (see <http://www.latitarivera.com/sangria>).

Cluster 4: Golden stories. This was the smallest group. These stories had an average of more than three good-story characteristics (mean=3.2). Stories in this group were authentic and concise, and contained reversal, humour or both. The stories were emotional, and had a plot and an archetype. Therefore, whether real or imaginary, stories in the category were more elaborate compared to silver stories. This group included stories in forms such as ads from Smoking (see <http://smokingpaper.com/es/spots/smoking-deluxe-2-0-con-un-lenguetazo-basta>), Tender Stories from Tous (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIt1uhWmuJU>), and a customer story from Santander (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0L2OnBIBfg>).

Discussion

The main contribution of this study is its identification of a gap between the theory and practice of storytelling, with Spanish companies and brands in several sectors missing opportunities to maximize the effectiveness of this communication strategy. First, despite the fact that with the explosive growth of social media and content marketing the opportunity to tell a brand story has increased, we observed that its use was not very popular among

³ The stories from Pacharán Zoco, titled “Cómo conocí a vuestra Amatsu” and “Batallitas”, used humour instead of being concise. However, other than this they shared the same characteristics as the rest of the stories in this group.

three-quarters of the 189 companies and brands analyzed. Specifically, storytelling practices were found to be present in five out of the six sectors analyzed, but with different degrees of intensity. They were practically non-existent in the communication and sport and technology and infrastructure sectors, while the food and beverage and fashion and habitat sectors accounted for 83.6% of the stories identified. In general, the results obtained from this study may suggest that storytelling practices are perceived as more useful for differentiating brands of consumer products than for those of other more professional products. However, prior empirical evidence has suggested that storytelling can be used by organizations to build their corporate brand in business-to-business sectors. This result may be explained by the fact that in product/service sectors that use rational arguments, statistics and facts as central elements of customers' decision making, analytical processing, rather than narrative processing, dominates. This makes storytelling less effective compared to other sectors.

Second, although the literature has suggested that an effective brand story must have four key elements (authenticity, conciseness, reversal and humour), the number of stories with these elements varied widely, indicating that managers place greater importance on the use of some elements in their stories than others. Therefore, it seems that there is no one story design that fits all companies and brands. Specifically, our identification of four different clusters of stories reflects the fact that managerial practices do not fit with the theory. A common element of the three clusters was that many of the stories were authentic, though this does not necessarily mean that they were based on real events. Humour and reversal are the two elements of a good story that were less frequently used, despite the fact that the literature has suggested that humour is an important ingredient in stories because it increases brand's likeability, positive affect for the product and consumers' attention. Its lack of use may have been because most products are not inherently humorous by nature. By the same token, with respect to the reversal element another discrepancy was identified between theory and practice. While theory has recommended the use of reversal stories as they communicate the obvious problem-solving abilities of the product, the managerial practices observed suggest that use of the reversal element may not always be feasible, as the topics of stories include not only the product, but also the consumers, company or even employees. These other topics may make it difficult to insert a problem-solution causal relationship into the story.

Authenticity is suggested as one element of a good story. However, Cluster 3 was made up of stories that lacked this attribute; nevertheless, it could be that the reader/viewer would consider them good stories based, among other things, on their aesthetic value. Ads that appeal to fantasy to transport the customer into an alternate world (for example, *Nina L'eau* by Nina Ricci; see <https://youtu.be/tUrCrXpdP.0>) may be as efficient as other types of stories, despite the fact that they are not based on real events.

Finally, regarding the kinds of elements used, the stories in our study were predominantly emotional; as suggested by the literature, emotional appeals seem to be more effective than informational ones. Most of the sample stories had an

archetype, with "the creator" being the most popular, but less than half had a plot. In general, the results suggest that being a silver story, a light story, a cherry-picker or a golden story is feasible with any type of plot (whether it exists), objective, topic, and archetype.

Managerial implications

For companies and brands that use stories, there is a room for improvement; thus, the managerial implications of our study are as follows. First, there should be greater emphasis on focusing the stories on the brand and customers, which is an appropriate and positive way to build and foster consumer-brand relationships. However, the literature has also indicated that storytelling is an effective way to foster corporate reputation and relationships with other internal and external stakeholders; in the cases observed, very few companies and brands (Campofrío and Carrera y Carrera being two examples) focused on audiences other than consumers, such as employees. Specifically, this focus may be of interest to companies belonging to technology and infrastructure sector as their main external stakeholders are not necessarily the final consumers but other companies, institutions or other publics.

A well-designed brand story might include four elements (authenticity, conciseness, reversal and humour), but the vast majority of the stories analyzed lacked one or more of these elements. Authenticity and conciseness were the two most-used elements; the former is associated with truth and reality, which has positive effects on brand attitudes and purchase intentions, as suggested by past research, while the latter improves clarity and memory and reduces boredom, thereby also contributing to building positive brand attitudes. However, when possible, brand managers might also use reversal stories because these stories outline clear causal relations between consumers' problems and the problem-solving abilities of the brand/product. These types of stories are especially important for experiential offerings, where consumers are unable to obtain sufficient information to evaluate the product before usage.

In all stories analyzed, the story content was controlled by the company and the brand, both of which adopted the role of storyteller, while consumers assumed the passive role of story-receiver. With the exception of a few brands – such as Santiveri, which encouraged consumers to share their own brand stories – most companies focused their marketing efforts on introducing brand-originated storytelling. However, past research has revealed that consumers do not always identify themselves equally well with all brands or become immersed into every brand story. For some brands, consumers' own stories might be more effective communicators of brand benefits and values compared to firm-originated stories (Lundqvist et al., 2013). Therefore, managers should not urge marketing departments to publish stories regardless of the stories' quality. Furthermore, creating captivating stories that engage customers requires specific skills. Employees should be trained in storytelling so that they can easily identify what makes a good story and create effective stories for their target market.

Most brands and companies in our study used their stories to communicate to others who the brand/company is, and

to transmit the related values. However, there exist other little-understood uses of storytelling, such as “taming the grapevine”, which consists of using storytelling to satirize untrue or unreasonable rumours or bad news that can undermine a brand’s reputation (Deighton et al., 1989). Therefore, other objectives for the use of storytelling might be explored.

These managerial suggestions are derived from our observations of the 104 stories analyzed and from past empirical evidence that has proven which story characteristics are more or less effective. Therefore, our suggestions must be taken with caution because we did not analyze consumers’ reactions to the stories considered in order to conclude which elements were most effective.

Limitations and further research

This research has several limitations, which can be seen as future research opportunities. First, the use of content analysis entails several drawbacks. First, the validity of the results may be questionable in its conclusions, methods and even approach compared to quantitative research.

Second, due to the explorative nature of the research and the absence of hypotheses to test, the authors served as coders of the content characteristics for stories that had previously been identified by two independent coders.

Although it was not in the authors’ interest to identify any specific typology of stories, future research should use independent coders to confirm the pattern of stories identified in this study.

Additionally, we focused on the stories from companies’ and brands’ official websites. However, there are other sources of stories on the Internet, such as personal blogs and social networks, which future research should explore to provide a more holistic understanding of the characteristics of stories based on the source (for example, the brand’s official blog vs. personal blogs) and the effectiveness of storytelling.

The stories analyzed varied in nature, including ads, company histories, customers’ and collaborators’ stories, etc. Some ads had appeared in mass media, while other stories were only accessible through the companies’ and brands’ official websites. Thus, measuring the effectiveness of these stories while controlling all of the variables was not possible. Therefore, future research could focus on the effectiveness of stories based on the source and the objectives of storytelling.

Conflict of interest

None declared.

Appendix A.1. Brand websites analyzed

Sector 1: Food and beverage

1	Barbadillo	17	Terras Gauda	33	Nocilla
2	Borges	18	Torres	34	Paladín
3	Campofrio	19	Vichy Catalán	35	Mesura
4	Conservas Garavilla	20	Acesur	36	Okey
5	Dulcesol	21	Gonzalez Byass	37	Grupo Zamora
6	El Pozo	22	Hijos de Rivera	38	Ramón Bilbao
7	Feliz Solis	23	Estrella de Galicia	39	Bodega Ramón Bilbao
8	Freixenet	24	Caberoiroa	40	Bodega Mar de Frades
9	Gallo	25	Club 1906	41	Bodega Monte Blanco
10	Ibarra Alimentación	26	Fontarel	42	Bodega Palacio de la Vega
11	Ibarra	27	Sidras Maeloc	43	Bodega Cruz de Alba
12	La Masía	28	Ponte da Boga	44	Bodega Volteo
13	Marqués de Cáceres	29	La tita Rivera	45	Licor 43
14	Osborne	30	Agua de Cuevas	46	Pacharán Zoco
15	Pescanova	31	Idilia Foods	47	Limoncello Villa Massa
16	Santiveri	32	Cola Cao		

Sector 2: Fashion and habitat

48	Adolfo Dominguez	67	Oysho	86	Panama
49	Andreu World	68	Zara Home	87	Pikolinos
50	Armand Basi	69	Uterqüe	88	Pronovias fashion group
51	Carrera y Carrera Madrid	70	Joma	89	Pronovias.es
52	Cortefiel	71	Keraben group	90	Pronovias (50 años)
53	Springfield	72	Keraben	91	St.Patrick
54	Pedro del Hierro	73	Metropol	92	La Sposa
55	Women’s secrets	74	Atenea	93	White One
56	Fifty Factory	75	Collage	94	Avenue Diagonal
57	Antonio Miro Studio	76	Casinfinita	95	It’s my party

58	Consentino Imagin & Anticipate	77	Acquabella	96	Puig
59	Festina	78	Signo	97	Nina Ricci
60	Hispanitas	79	Lladró	98	Carolina Herrera
61	Inditex	80	Mango	99	Paco Rabanne
62	Zara	81	Miguel Bellido	100	Jean paul Gaultier
63	Pull & Bear	82	Mirto	101	Tous
64	Massimo Dutti	83	Mustang	102	El Corte Inglés
65	Bershka	84	Natura Bissé	103	Gios Eppo
66	Stradivarius	85	Neck & Neck		
Sector 3: Communication and sports					
104	Atlético de Madrid	112	Melia Hoteles & Resorts	120	NH Collection
105	Barceló (viajes)	113	Melia	121	NH Hotels
106	FC Barcelona	114	Paradisus	122	Hesperia
107	Iberia	115	Inside	123	Paradores
108	Grupo Iberia	116	Tryphotels	124	Real Madrid
109	Imaginarium	117	Sol hotels	125	Renfe
110	LFP (Liga Fútbol Profesional)	118	Club Melia	126	Rodman
111	Llorente y Cuenca	119	NH Hotel group	127	Hola
Sector 4: Other sectors					
128	Agbar	138	Motortown	148	Smoking
129	Viajes El Corte Inglés	139	Sportown	149	Celesa
130	Bricor	140	La tienda en casa	150	Terranova Papers
131	Hipercor	141	Optica 2000	151	Anoia
132	OpenCor	142	Gaes	152	Indusgraphic
133	SuperCor	143	Gaes Junior	153	Pure Hemp
134	Supermercado	144	Microson	154	MB Papers
135	Sfera	145	Instituto AI (Gaes)	155	Ramondin
136	Primeriti	146	Indas		
137	Bodamas	147	Miquel y Costas		
Sector 5: Professional and business services					
156	Aenor	162	Escuela Org. Ind.	168	MAPFRE
157	BBVA	163	ESADE	169	Santander
158	Fundación BBVA	164	ESIC	170	Uría Menendez
159	CaixaBank	165	Garrigues	171	Tax Free
160	Crédito y Caución	166	Herrero y Asoc.		
161	Cuatrecasa G.P.	167	IE Busines School		
Sector 6: Technology and infrastructure					
172	Abertis	178	Iberdrola	184	Televés
173	Applus +s	179	Ikusi	185	Gainsa
174	Ega Master	180	Kalam	186	Gamelsa
175	Fermax	181	Levantina	187	GCE
176	Gas N. Fenosa	182	Repsol	188	GSERTEL
177	GMV	183	Talgo	189	Tredess

Appendix A.2. Independent coder examples of a non-story and a story

Non-story: A story must include a chronology, causality and character development. In this example there is a chronology, but no causality between events and no character development.



Story: A story must include a chronology, causality and character development. In this example the three elements are present.

"In 1835 the young Manuel Maria Gonzalez Angel used to take long walks with his uncle Jose Angel y Vargas for long walks in the old town of Jerez, when in the city the sound of the hooves of the horses could still be heard making their way through the streets. Manuel Maria found in his Uncle Pepe the best support to get started in the fascinating business of sherry. In those years, Jose Angel, Uncle Pepe, begin a very personal selection of casks in order to find the perfect wine. . . Years later, Manuel Maria Gonzalez Angel called this vintage "Solera del Tío Pepe", and the inscription can still be read in one of the vintage casks. This is how the legend of the most famous sherry of Spain and the world began to be forged."

And the story continues to be written. . .

<http://www.gonzalezbyass.com/familia-del-vino/>

Appendix A.3. Codebook content analysis

The codification of the different variables, and examples of each, are as follows:

Sector	Brands (websites)			Action
1 = Food and beverage 2 = Fashion and habitat 3 = Communication and sports 4 = Other sectors 5 = Professional and business services 6 = Technology and infrastructure	See detailed list of brands in Appendix A.1			Nominal variable to identify each action, since some brands can have several stories.
How: format of the story. The story can be told using only text, sound or images, or a combination of these	Type of content: A story can have different types of contents. Each type of content is codified as a variable 0 = No, 1 = Yes, 2 = Not sure	Where: Where the story is hold	Who^b: who tells the story	What is told?: A story can have different contents. Each type of content is codified as a variable 0 = No, 1 = Yes, 2 = Not sure
1 = Text 2 = Image 3 = Sound 4 = Video 5 = Text And image 6 = Text And sound 7 = Text and video	1 = Functional (the greatest value for the lowest price; attributes; etc.) 2 = Emotional	1 = Ad 2 = Blog 3 = Website	1 = Company 2 = Consumer 3 = <i>Other people (collaborator, blogger, etc.)</i>	1 = The product (characteristics and/or benefits) 2 = Customers using the product or their relationship with the company/brand 3 = The company (story, values) 4 = The employees or people who work with or for the company 5 = The brand
Story objective: Select one of the following objectives ^{a,b}			Tone of the story^b	Character development: You are made aware of the psychological state of the protagonist. That is, what he or she is thinking and feeling.
1 = Sparking action 2 = <i>Communicating who the company is</i> 3 = Sharing knowledge 4 = Transmitting values 5 = Taming the grapevine	6 = Leading people into the future 7 = Communicating who the brand is 8 = Fostering collaboration 9 = <i>Customers' objective</i>	1 = Positive 2 = Negative 3 = Neutral 4 = <i>Bittersweet</i>		0 = No 1 = Yes
The story is:	Elements of a good story. A story can have one or several of the following elements. Each type of element is coded as a variable 0 = No, 1 = Yes			
1 = Real 2 = Fictitious (inspired by imagination)	Authenticity: genuineness, reality, truth	Conciseness: It excludes unnecessary words, phrases or details	Reversal: A change of one's fortune or luck. It does not have negative connotations.	Humour: The story makes the audience smile and laugh.
Plot: There is a beginning, a middle and an end to the story. 0 = No, 1 = Yes Type of plot (examples) 1 = Rags to riches (<i>Cinderella, Aladdin</i>) 2 = Rebirth (<i>The Frog Prince, Beauty and the Beast</i>)	Archetype: A model, type or typical character. 0 = No, 1 = Yes. Type of archetype (examples)			
	Type of product			

Appendix A.3 (Continued)

Sector	Brands (websites)	Action
3 = The quest (<i>Indiana Jones</i>)	1 = Ultimate strength (overcoming an obstacle)	1 = Non-alcoholic drinks
4 = Overcoming the monster (<i>Star Wars</i>)	2 = The siren (being sexually stimulated)	2 = Alcoholic drinks
5 = Tragedy (<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>)	3 = The hero (acting courageously)	3 = Dried food
6 = Comedy (<i>Four Weddings and a Funeral</i>)	4 = The antihero (being contrarian)	4 = Fresh food
7 = Voyage and return (<i>The Hobbit, Finding Nemo</i>)	5 = The creator (crafting something new)	5 = Other kinds of products
8 = Not sure	6 = The change master (controlling one's destiny)	6 = Beauty products
	7 = The powerbroker (exhibiting authority)	7 = Perfume
	8 = The wise old man (sharing experience, advice)	8 = Textiles
	9 = The loyalist (offering trust, reassurance)	9 = Shoes
	10 = The mother of goodness (being protected)	10 = Decoration/home
	11 = The little trickster (conveying humour, non-conformity)	11 = Jewellery
	12 = The enigma (being fascinating, a mystery)	12 = Sport team
		13 = Transport
		14 = Hotels
		15 = Toys
		16 = Consultancy services
		17 = Construction
		18 = Water management
		19 = Financial services
		20 = Motor
		21 = Insurance
		22 = Travel
		23 = Energy
		24 = Hardware/tools
		25 = Certificates
		26 = Food stores
		27 = Motorways
		28 = Online selling clubs
		29 = Education
		30 = Telecommunications
		31 = Access control
		32 = Technology and services for companies
		33 = Lawyers' offices
		34 = Health services
		35 = Warranty seals
		36 = Paper
		37 = Journals

^a The description of each objective provided to coders is the same as the one that appears in Table 1. Due to limitations regarding space in the paper we do not discuss the information in this codebook again.

^b Categories in italics were modified or incorporated after pilot coding.

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