Corporate Storytelling as an Effective Communication Tool

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Abstract:

This paper proposes to highlight the effectiveness of storytelling as a powerful and persuasive communication tool in the corporate context. This peculiar kind of communicative approach allows the creation of a symbolic universe potentially shared by the public, with which not only can it recognize itself, but with which it can actually interact. The fundamental theories of narration and their evolution are taken into consideration, as well as the evolution of the consumer into prosumer and the sociological and economic consequences emerged. In the present paper we will discuss two case studies: *Wind: Papà* – an example of a short film with a strong emotional impact on the audience and a revolutionary message – and *Léon Vivien: Facebook 1914* – a masterful example of how narrative content can be exploited using different mediums and the potential of social networks.

Keywords: *Communication, Internet, Narrative, Prosumer, Social Media, Storytelling*

1. *The Digital Revolution*

Internet-based technologies have changed the way in which human beings live. *The so called Fourth Industrial Revolution* affected humans' everyday lives and dramatically changed their behaviours in real life and furthermore in communications. The internet has revolutionized the computer and communications world like nothing before. The invention of the telegraph, telephone, radio, and computer, set the stage for this unprecedented integration of capabilities. The internet is at once a world-wide broadcasting medium,

a mechanism for information dissemination, and a medium for interaction and collaboration between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic location.

The astonishing success of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (and Instagram) led us to this discussion and to the aims of this paper. According to the 2019 edition of the annual report of *We Are Social*, more than 360 billion people came online for the first time during 2018, at an average of more than one million new users each day. About 57 percent of the world's population is now connected to the internet. In addition to this global phenomenon, in Italy there has been a major increase of 27% in internet users in just one year. According to a survey on Eurostat's website, a casual internet user is defined as someone who has used the internet within the last three months, while a regular internet user is defined as someone who has used the internet at least once a week within the reference period of the survey. Out of the population of 59.25 in Italy, 54.8 million people are internet users. *Internet Penetration* is the relationship between the number of Internet users in each country and its demographic data. In Italy Internet Penetration in 2019 is at 92%.

The infinite potential acquired by most of mankind through this new media has established new rules in communication, politics, economics and marketing. We live in a narrative dimension. From the car to the bedroom, from cell phones to television reality shows, our daily life is constantly wrapped in a narrative network that filters perceptions, stimulates thoughts, evokes emotions, excites senses, and determines multisensory responses.

The First Industrial Revolution used water and steam power to mechanize production. The Second used electric power to create mass production. The Third used electronics and information technology to automate production. Now a Fourth Industrial Revolution is building on the Third, the digital revolution that has been evolving since the middle of the last century. It is characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres. The possibilities of billions of people connected by mobile devices, with unprecedented processing power, storage capacity, and access to knowledge, are unlimited. (Schwab 2015: 1)

Storytelling has now reached the highest level of pervasion ever in human existence; both work and private life are part of a narrative continuum. The historical moment in which we live, from the invention of the World Wide Web (conventionally attributed to the English computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee in 1991) to today, is very peculiar from the sociological and economic point of view. The technologies we created to be "always connected" to a virtual world that becomes more and more real have brought major changes to the social, and above all, economic dynamics in the post-modern era. We live in a new symbolic economy which contributes to the expansion

of the immaterial, where the virtual dimension is becoming the reality and the medium becomes the message. This passage from Carmagnola (2002) is illuminating for the purposes of our discussion:

It is, therefore, a system where the economic and the symbolic reproduce each other, where the imagery of the commodity derives from the imagery of customs, and where customary innovations are enhanced by passing through the production system. The media diffusion of lifestyles and languages constantly reconstitutes new features of the value chain, it becomes production passing through figuration and narrativization. The evolution of the economy of the sign in fictional economics is thus presented as a multipolar grid in which the traditional industrial research of efficiency is complementary to the capacity for imaginary reproduction. In all this, the media, in turn, are much more than a simple mechanism of dissemination and transmission of images and end up becoming one of the forms of deployed social and productive intelligence. (Carmagnola 2002: 140)

2. Narrative as a way of thinking

The attention to narration and its forms can be documented starting from the illustrious precedent of Greek culture and through the whole history of poetry, literary criticism, and entertainment. The suggestions, in this sense, are very numerous and drawn from different fields: anyone who has dealt with science and art has had to face the theme of narration. In the perspective of more formal analysis, the temporal and reference limits certainly shrink, but this does not simplify our work.

Among the most significant names included, one cannot fail to mention Vladimir Propp, linguist and folklore enthusiast, who meticulously analysed what he saw as the underlying structure of Russian folktales; formalists such as Mikhail Bakhtin who continued to develop narrative analysis; ethnological scholars like Levi-Strauss along with the US linguist Noam Chomsky, who examined the invariable structure of the universal human mind; literature theorists such as Genette, Bremond, Todorov and Segre; linguists like Greimas and Uspensky; sociologists, like Goffman, and more recently, semiologists like Chatman and Eco. Thanks to these multidisciplinary investigations it is now possible to talk about storytelling.

There has been a significant amount of interest and speculation about the nature of the narrative since the mid-1960s. This may well be a function of our information society, where communication and the means of communication have become increasingly important to individuals and organizations. Furthermore, cross-cultural studies (Levi-Strauss 1972; Chafe 1980) suggest that narrative is an elementary and persistent form of human expression regardless of ethnic origin, primary language, and enculturation. This ubiquity is famously described by Barthes as follows:

The narratives of the world are numberless. The narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances as though any material were fit to receive man's stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting, stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, and conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there never has been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different, even opposing, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (Barthes 1977: 79)

Narratives began to be systematically investigated with a very ambitious intent: to identify the minimal units of any narrative and to find a universal grammar of the story. This first phase encompassed the development of a series of essential tools for classifying the position of the narrator in a story, evaluating the relationship between the time of the narrated story and the time of the discourse that narrates it, identifying the point of view through which the story is told. All these authors have somehow contributed to the narratological field, highlighting that "every human culture has deep, almost archetypal narrative structures, which recur in the construction of everyday life" (Fontana 2009: 19). This concept represents the conclusion of much of literature in different fields, so much that anthropology seems to merge with semiotics, linguistics with philosophy, psychology with literature, almost raising the narrative principle as the foundation of the whole human essence.

The term *narratology* was coined by the philosopher Tzvetan Todorov in 1969 to indicate the study of narrative structures. According to many scholars it is a heterogeneous discipline which draws on different areas of knowledge. What we are most interested in is getting to the primary nature of storytelling, understanding how to best use the word and how to make our story effective. The power of the word is immense and trying to exploit its potential by drawing on theory, putting into practice algorithms and alchemies that make our stories effective and persuasive, is the goal of this research.

3. *The Narrative Turn*

Starting from the 90s, the study of narrative practices has embarked on a new, more fertile road thanks to the cross-contributions of cognitivism, neuroscience, and studies of artificial intelligence. Cognitivists have realized that our mind, starting from childhood, is based on the chrono-causal connection of episodes. Essentially, we learn to correlate events as causes and ef-

fects or to make one internal state the engine of an external fact. At the same time, neuroscientists began to photograph with neuro-imaging techniques such as TMS (Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation) or PET (Positron Emission Tomography) the way in which, when we observe something, we tend to classify it through the comparison with a stereotypical model, derived from similar experiences recorded in the memory. Each new experience is evaluated based on its conformity or difference with respect to a previous scheme. In this new perspective, narrative is a gym: we use it as training to interpret the world according to agreed expectations.

We can speak of an epistemological turning point in post-classical narratology thanks to the decisive contribution of cognitivism and neuroscience (Bamberg 2007). The beginning of this new course can be placed in 2002, the year of the publication of *Story Logic* by David Herman (Herman 2002). In Herman's work for the first time the neurocognitive sciences enter an area that had previously been the field of literary scholars and linguists. As has been shown by scholars working in the field of Artificial Intelligence, the human mind, in order to integrate partial information into broader conceptual frameworks, accesses an archive of situational and contextual knowledge, recorded in the memory. Such studies, include those by Marvin Minsky (1963 and 1986), Roger C. Schank and Robert P. Abelson (1977) and David E. Rumelhart (1980). They tried to replace the concept of context with more explicit and detailed constructs: frames (or schemata) and scripts. The frames aim to reproduce the mechanisms of human knowledge and expectations regarding standard events and situations. The frames basically concern situations like seeing a room or making a promise, while the scripts involve sequences of actions such as playing a football game, going to a birthday party, or eating in a restaurant.

Beginning with Guy Cook (1994), schema theory has been adopted as a means of literary analysis; the scholar proposed a change of focus in literary theory, from a limited analysis to the textual structure, leading to an analysis that takes into consideration the interaction between the text and the cognitive structures of the reader. Frames are prototypical structures. Scripts are prototypical sequences. Both are present in the reader's mind, and function as models through which he adapts the text to his usual ways of thinking. Thus, according to Monika Fludernik (1996, 2009), readers narrate what they read, or rather narrativity is not simply something present or absent in the texts, but rather something recognized by the readers or sometimes projected by them within the texts. Fludernik, taking up the concept of *naturalization* introduced by Jonathan Culler (1975), uses the term *narrativization* to describe a reading strategy that naturalizes it through the use of narrative schemata: in the process of narrativization, readers commit themselves to read texts as narrative, that is, as manifesting a human experience; the narrativization then serves to reintegrate the new with the known and the famil-

iar, operating on the basis of a higher-level verisimilitude, which introduces a plurality of frames of reference. When readers are struggling with realistic texts, the process of narrativization is quite automatic, but when confronted with difficult or even potentially illegible texts, they consciously seek strategies to recover them as narratives.

4. Narrative Communication

Scholars such as Seymour Chatman and Umberto Eco examined content in the context of narrative communication. They investigated the roles of the author and the reader within the text itself. Their contribution to narratological theories is enormous. In fact, they analyzed narrative as communication and tried to understand how the transmission of meaning occurs between subject and recipient, author and reader, company and customer; focusing on the various dynamics that occur. In his *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (1980) Chatman summarizes narrative communication as follows:

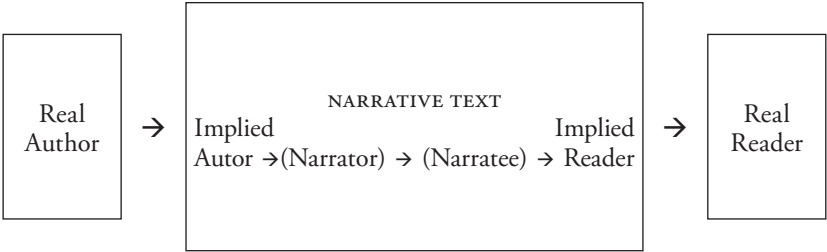| Real Author	→	NARRATIVE TEXT Implied Implied Autor →(Narrator) → (Narratee) → Reader	→	Real Reader

Table 1. The narrative-communication model (Chatman 1978, 158)

This scheme highlights the fundamental roles within narrative communication. At the beginning and at the end of the scheme we find concepts such as real author and real reader, while in the center we find the figures placed within the text. The implied author is "the principle that invented the narrator along with the rest of the narrative" (Chatman 1987: 157). He is essentially the constructor of the text. At the other end, the implied reader is the presupposed reader; in the middle, narrator and narratee: the narrator is the one who speaks in the text and is different from the real author, while the narratee is "an expedient with which the implicit author informs the real reader on how to play the implicit reader".

Chatman improved the diagram several times within his book by adding elements or making clarifications. What we need to remember is that this scheme of interaction between reader and author according to its various degrees, is a scheme that will also be examined by Eco in his search for

a theory of interpretation. In one of his most important books: *Six Walks in Narrative Woods* (1994), the so-called *Norton Lectures* held at Harvard University in 1992 which summarized some of his thought already presented in well-known books like *Lector in Fabula* and *Opera Aperta* (1979). He considers the forest as a metaphor for narrative text. Paying homage to the postmodern writer Jorge Luis Borges and his famous novel *El jardin de senderos que se bifurcan,* Eco writes: "A text is a garden with forking paths. Even when in a forest there are marked paths, everyone can trace his own path deciding to go to the right or left of a certain tree that he meets. In a narrative text the reader is forced at any time to make a choice" (Eco 1994: 3).

The philosopher somehow completes the framework developed by Chatman, warning us about the potential of the reader/recipient writing:

Every text, after all, is a lazy machine asking the reader to do some of its work. What a problem it would be if a text were to say everything the receiver is to understand – it would never end. (Eco 1994: 3)

He does not limit himself to completing the picture but enlarges it by emphasizing the scope of the model. We are talking not only about literary works but about any statement based on narration to convey meaning. This means that this reasoning can be safely applied to many forms: advertising, radio, and cinema. The reason is simple: in narrative communication a sort of dialogue is established between subject and recipient, which is inserted at the level of the text: "Whenever the speaker is about to end a sentence, we as readers or listeners make a bet (albeit unconsciously): we predict his or her choice, or anxiously wonder what choice will be made" (Eco 1994: 6). Obviously, the dynamics are variable according to the different forms considered. In oral discourse, dialogue is built on an exchange that requires direct feedback, while in a literary text or text for cinema this occurs indirectly through the relationship between author and model reader.

These concepts introduced by Eco refer in some ways to Chatman's *author* and *implicit reader*: while the model reader is the reader-type that the text foresees as a collaborator and tries to create, the model author is the typical author, the one who is created in the empirical reader's mind. For our research is now crucial to analyze the ways in which the message (conveyed in narrative form) reaches the recipient. This assumption is fundamental for a company, a brand or an individual who decides to rely on narrative communication to achieve a certain purpose. It is no coincidence that the interpretative process of the text is often at the center of Chatman's studies. In his analysis he comes to some important results which are summarized below:

    –   The text is a lazy machine that requires the effort of the interpreter
         to produce meaning. (We remember that interpreting means ac-

cording to Eco and traditional semiotics, translating a sign into another expression)

– To understand the concept of text, it is necessary to take into consideration the starting code (see in this regard the work of Roman Jakobson) and the Encyclopedia, or the recorded set of all interpretations, conceivable objectively as a library of libraries.

– The latter is a regulatory hypothesis in reading the text with respect to interpretation, deriving from the virtual library of each, and variable according to the culture, education and previous readings.

– The text leaves the reader the interpretative initiative. That is, it is issued so that someone updates it and brings its meaning to light and it is at this level that the figures of model author, model reader and Chatman's scheme are inserted.

Starting from these ideas, Eco describes the process of interpretation as follows: "The model reader of a story is not the empirical reader. The empirical reader is you, me, anyone, when we read a text. Empirical readers can read in many ways, and there is no law that tells them how to read, because they often use the text as a container for their own passions, which may come from outside the text or which the text may arouse by chance" (Eco 1994: 8). The model reader, on the other hand, manifests itself on an interpretative level as the author of the game, as he signs a pact with him by letting himself be transported through the text.

Real broadcasters and recipients work according to textual strategies, implementing textual cooperation on multiple levels within narrative communication. In this cooperative process, the reader must use the knowledge in his Encyclopedia and implement common or intertextual scripts. Some narrative techniques such as delay, suspense, and slowdown, encourage what Eco calls *inferential walks* which are performed outside the narrative forest and encouraged by the author himself. For the reading we must always refer to a possible world existing behind the text, due to its reconstruction of meaning.

A few years earlier, Eco addressed these issues in *Opera aperta* (1962). Through his reflection on narration and interpretation, he wanted us to reflect on the relationship between text and viewer and on the interpretative possibilities where the latter is involved. This is why when he speaks of an open work and by openness, Eco intends "the programmed predisposition of a particularly free cooperation, in the attempt (however) to direct the initiative of the interpreter according to certain possible interpretative tendencies that the work does not impose but in some way it prepares, making them more probable" (Eco 1962, 12). During the process of interpretation, the reader has a certain level of freedom that is manifested by opening the text itself

to walks outside. This freedom can be limited within the text according to the textual strategy inserted by the author himself. We will therefore have open texts and closed texts depending on the constraints used. The theme is certainly very complex, but in the context of Corporate Communication it does not lose value. On the contrary, it helps us to broaden our horizons. In fact, it is very useful to understand the importance of the reader and his constant freedom in interpreting the text whether it be a literary work, an article, or an advertising spot.

From this point of view the author's work is very similar to the initial work of the communicator in identifying its stakeholders. Organizations must track down their audience in order to communicate properly in the same way as the author has their model reader in mind. Eco's theorization goes even further when it comes to combine narrative and cognitive psychology studies. Inside his *Norton Lectures*, Eco introduces the concept of frames and knowledge of reality conceived through narrative schemes stating that "[...] we understand a sentence because we are used to thinking of an elementary story to which the statement refers, even when we are talking about individuals or natural genres" (Eco 1994, 161). It speaks of frames, referring to recent discoveries in the field of artificial intelligence, "[...] as schemes of action like entering a restaurant, going to the station to catch a train, or opening an umbrella" (Eco 1994, 162).

And he goes on:

[...] a psychologist like Jerome Bruner assumes that even our normal way of accounting for everyday experience takes the form of a story, and the same happens with History as historia rerum gestarum. [...] Our perceptive stories work because we trust a previous story. We would not fully perceive a tree if we did not know (because others have told us) that it is the result of slow growth, and it has not sprung up from morning to evening: this certainty is also part of our "understanding" that that tree it is a tree, and not a flower. (Eco 1994: 161)

5. Consumer vs Prosumer

The most difficult challenge that companies face today is to capture the attention of consumers. It is therefore essential to set up communication strategies that convey effective and credible messages capable of affecting consumers and positively influencing their attitude towards products. Considering the current market scenario, which is increasingly saturated and unstable, doing this becomes increasingly difficult. In fact, according to research carried out by the Mc Studio communication agency, about 79% of people do not read a text word by word but look at general content. About 82% of consumers ignore advertising if it is considered intrusive. Therefore, companies need to

develop new ways of communication in order to survive in the market, bearing in mind the profound change that has affected both the consumer and the entire society. An increasing number of brands use storytelling as a communication technique which has in many cases proved to be the key to attract and retain consumers. Before going on to examine the need to include storytelling among integrated marketing communication tools and why it represents an effective tool to reach consumers, it is essential to observe the new distinctive features of contemporary society and consumers.

The term *prosumer* is generally attributed to Alvin Toffler (1980) who devoted considerable attention to it in his work, *The Third Wave*. Toffler argued that prosumption was predominant in pre-industrial societies; what he called the "first wave". It was followed by a "second wave" of marketization that drove "a wedge into society that separated these two functions, thereby giving birth to what we now call producers and consumers" (Toffler 1980: 265). Thus, the primordial economic form is neither production nor consumption, but rather it is prosumption. However, in Toffler's view, contemporary society is moving away from the aberrant separation of production and consumption and towards a "third wave" that, in part, signals their reintegration in "the rise of the prosumer" (Toffler 1980: 266).

Technological revolution brought about by the internet and digital technologies is one of the main features of the contemporary era. It has profoundly changed the way companies communicate. In particular, the transition from traditional to digital media and the rise of the so-called 2.0 technologies have allowed the consumer to no longer be just a passive receiver of corporate communication. The consumer can establish a direct dialogue with organizations, politicians, and authorities by implementing continuous feedback and response mechanisms. New technologies represent a real reversal of perspective in terms of the relationship between the company and the customer (Fabris 2003: 130). The relationship between consumers and companies is no longer monodirectional but is instead characterized by interactivity, conceived as the possibility for users or consumers to influence the other components of the system (other users, means, and contents) and to be mutually influenced by the same (Pastore 2008: 434).

Characteristics of digital technologies such as multimedia, cross-media, and dynamism have given the consumer greater decision-making power. He can utilize different types of content and expressive codes on multiple devices, plus he can himself be a content creator. This, on the other hand, can generate the problem of *information overload* occurring when the amount of information available exceeds the individual's ability to process and store it efficiently. According to an estimate made by Martin Hilbert, a fellow at the University of Southern California, the percentage of information present in the digital world has increased from 25% in 2000 to 98% in 2013. In fact, consumers are constantly assaulted by numerous messages from many brands

on multiple devices. As a consequence, they have become more adept at filtering information and focusing only on that relevant to them. In fact, according to research conducted by Microsoft, the average attention span of consumers has decreased from twelve to eight seconds from 2000 to today, though the ability to do more things simultaneously, the so-called multitasking, has improved.

Another fundamental aspect to be considered is the radical change of the concept of consumption from the modern to the post-modern era. Previously, consumption was not considered as an autonomous dimension but always as an appendix of production. Nowadays it has instead taken on a brand-new meaning: "The value of a good is also and perhaps above all a semantic value through which we express ourselves and with which we communicate with other" (Fabris 2008: 68). Consumption has become a language through which the individual constantly communicates the distinctive traits of their identity, including their values, beliefs, and social status. As a result, products are purchased today more for the symbols they represent than their technical characteristics.

Furthermore, according to Fontana, consumption has become pure narration: "cars, cell phones, clothes, furniture, creams, companies, individuals, territories … everything is accompanied by a narrative framework that justifies and promotes its existence" (Fontana 2010: 77) and he goes even further stating that objects have become narratives that are factually bought into: "non-places that are themselves targeted narratives, staging set up artfully to excite us, excite us and push us to social recognition through purchase" (Fontana 2010: 79). The transition from an economy of goods and services to an economy of experiences is closely linked to this last aspect. A progressive dematerialization of physical objects is taking place as consumer attention is increasingly shifting towards what the object represents abstractly and not as it is physically. For this reason, the real economic offer is represented by experiences and no longer by material products or even by services. Unlike a service, an experience can be defined as "a series of memorable events that a company stages in a theatrical play to engage him in a personal way" (Pine and Gilmour 1998: 2).

According to Pine and Gilmore (1998), experiences represent the fourth stage of the economic offer – after commodities, goods and services – and they were born as a response to the standardization and industrialization of services, as a way to differentiate themselves from the competition. Companies have created experiences in order to escape from competition based on prices and to be able to offer added value to consumers trying to obtain higher profit margins. The planning of exciting and engaging experiences, therefore, guarantees a real competitive advantage to those companies that manage to put them into practice. The success of products such as gift boxes, including stays, dinners, or wellness programs, is an example of the growth

of experiences as an economic offer. According to research by the National Retail Federation conducted by Prosper Insight & Analytics, about 52% of consumers prefer an experience as a gift, a percentage that rises to 57% in the age group between 18 and 24. The importance of experiences is also confirmed by another Oracle survey conducted by Harris Interactive, according to which about 86% of customers would pay more for a better consumer experience and 89% of them switch to a competitor in the case of a mediocre experience.[1]

Finally, it is essential to consider the role of emotions in the purchasing decision-making process. The era of the *homo oeconomicus*, when the consumer was a rational being who based his decisions on a meditated analysis of costs and benefits, is now gone. Numerous neuromarketing studies, on the other hand, have shown how emotions guide most decisions and behaviors of human beings. According to Baba Shiv, professor of marketing at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, about 95% of the decisions that we take daily are not rational but dictated by emotions (Brown 2015: 83). Emotions can be defined as mental states that arise as reactions to stimuli from the external environment and play a fundamental role in many processes of the human mind: they influence the information processing; they push towards the implementation of behaviours oriented to specific objectives; they act as intermediaries in responding to attractive requests; and finally they are also useful for measuring the effects of marketing stimuli and consumer well-being (Bagozzi and Gobinanth 1999: 202). Considering this context, therefore, it is possible to understand the importance of using new forms of communication capable of breaking through the barrier of filters that consumers use every day to avoid the continuous flow of information. At the same time new communication technologies can enhance the symbolic aspects of consumption, arouse strong emotions, and create an engaging experience for the consumer.

6. Storytelling is Story-Selling

As far as storytelling is concerned, most of the scholars who have dedicated themselves to it, have defined it as "the art of telling stories". However, following the approach of Fontana, this definition represents a not fully correct translation of the term storytelling which does not have a valid equivalent in Italian. According to the author, in fact, the term "*story*" should not be translated into "storie" but with the Italian "racconto" which in turn can be assimilated to the terms "*representation*" and "*simulation*": "for this rea-

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[1] See <http://winthecustomer.com/86-percent-of-u-s-adults-will-pay-more-for-a-better-customer-experience/> (05/2019).

son, storytelling means creating text, visual, and audio representations: of a brand, product or service, to excite or better relate to an audience". Ultimately, therefore, the author defines storytelling as "communicating through stories". Also significant is the definition given by the NSN - National Storytelling Network, the US organization that deals with the promotion and dissemination of storytelling: "Storytelling is the interactive art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener's imagination".

Another important definition is given by the Storytelling Observatory, a cultural association that aims to stimulate the research and study of narrative sciences in Italy: storytelling is "the way of thinking and communicating of the human being, present in every area where there is interaction between people." In this case, storytelling is defined not only a way to communicate with other people but also a means by which man organizes thought. This definition is also confirmed by the authors Lee and Shin (2014: 6): "storytelling is a fundamental way for humans to perceive the world and a device for emotional utterance regarding the world as people see it."

Therefore, storytelling is a technique that belongs to the discipline of narrative and literal studies that can be defined as the act of narrating or communicating a message through stories using the principles of rhetoric. Progressively this technique has been adopted also in other areas always with the function of conveying a message but to achieve objectives of a different nature. Today, in fact, storytelling is successfully used in the economic and pedagogical sciences as well as in political communication: it is a form of discourse that is imposed in all sectors of society and transcends political, cultural or professional boundaries.

As it is also specified by the Storytelling Observatory, "it is a specific discipline of the Narrative Sciences, with different operative declinations: from marketing to medicine, from politics to the world of consumption" and as also stated by Lynn Smith, journalist of the *Los Angeles Times*, in her article *Not the Same Old Story* (2001):

Historians, lawyers, physicians, economists, and psychologists have all rediscovered the power of stories to frame reality, and storytelling has come to rival logic as a way to understand legal cases, geography, illness or war.[2]

It has therefore been proven that storytelling can be a useful tool to achieve goals even outside the literary field. Today storytelling is successfully used also in the economic and pedagogical sciences as well as in political communication.

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[2] See <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-nov-11-cl-2758-story.html> (05/2019).

After defining what is meant by storytelling, it is essential to analyze the reasons why today it represents one of the most widely used communication tools in different fields and with different approaches. As previously analysed, it is a form of communication that has always existed, it represented the main way in which the human being gave meaning to the external world and transmitted information to future generations. Storytelling has always been an effective communication tool and its recent success is due to the rediscovery of its persuasive and communicative power. It is possible to identify three clusters of reasons that explain the effectiveness of the stories:

1. The way of thinking of the human being through narrative schemes and his physiological need to believe in something;

2. The phenomenon of neural coupling which consists in a cerebral alignment of the brains of those involved in the story and takes place during the story;

3. The ability of stories to arouse emotions and create an emotional connection with the audience.

The first element that determines the effectiveness of storytelling is linked to the peculiar way of humans of thinking and interpreting the surrounding reality. As evidenced by psychologist Jerome Bruner humans do not use logical and scientific argument to organize their own experience but uses the narrative form that represents a general convention to give meaning to reality:

For many historical reasons, including the practical power inherent in the use of logic, mathematics, and empirical science, we have concentrated on the child's growth as "little scientist", "little logician", "little mathematician" […] we do not achieve our mastery of social reality by growing up as "little scientists", "little logicians" or "little mathematicians" […] we organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative. (Bruner 1991: 4)

This thought is also shared by the authors Woodside, Sood, and Miller (2008). According to them, the human being thinks in a natural way with narrative and non-argumentative patterns. According to Mike Turner (1996), the story is a basic principle of the human mind through which every human being organizes his experiences, his knowledge, and his thoughts. Consequently, storytelling is effective first of all because it is a mechanism already present in the human mind. Humans elaborate stories and use them daily to explain the reality they live: "we are therefore in the presence of a foun-

dational instinct, as Sharazade already knew that he was able to suspend his death sentence by enchanting the sultan with his narrations." Gottschall (2012) states that it is even a genetic component of human DNA and that if it were not so, evolution would surely have eliminated it.

Precisely because the stories are part of our nature and represent the way we organize our thoughts; we are also willing to listen to them and believe the message they want to convey.

According to Fontana (2009), narratives are successful because whenever a story is told, a self-delusion mechanism that derives from the natural propensity of the human being to believe in something is activated in the human mind. Listening to a story begins, in fact, when a process is triggered which leads to setting aside one's critical faculties, which would be able to grasp even the smallest incongruity in history, and fall into a "state of conscience altered with respect to the norm, which leads us to identify ourselves completely with the object of the narration and with whom it is telling, causing us to suspend our disbelief." This state of consciousness is called the *listening narrative trance* which consists of an extremely engaging experience that drives man to abandon himself totally to the pleasure of listening and which derives from his innate need to believe.

The stories, therefore, have a strong communicative power, because man has a physiological need to believe. The satisfaction of this need takes place through the narrative listening trance that consists in lowering the mental defences and in the total abandonment towards what is told. The words of the English poet and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge, reported by Jonathan Gottschall in his book *The Storytelling Animal*, clearly explain this concept. In fact, he argued that the "willing suspension of disbelief" is fundamental to enjoying any story, stating that "in order to enjoy myself, I have to silence my inner skeptic."

However, the narrative trance of listening does not take over as soon as the story begins, rather there are some stages that lead the listener / reader to gradually abandon himself to narrative pleasure. They are seven and are valid for any type of story, whether it is a political discourse or a brand narrative:

1. Contact: it represents the moment in which for the first time one comes into contact with narration through the five senses;

2. Familiarity: after the first contact, it is the moment in which one begins to develop trust and confidence with the narrative object;

3. Immersion: it represents the moment in which the narration totally envelops the audience to which it is addressed, which can be considered "immersed" in the story;

4. Identification: it is the moment, considered the most important, in which the identification of the audience takes place with the elements of the story that relate to memory and personal experience;

5. Emergence: it is the moment in which the narration ends, and the audience emerges from the trance in which it fell during the story;

6. Distancing: it represents the moment, after the end of the story, during which the details of the same are forgotten but the memories that the experience as a whole has left behind are not forgotten;

7. Transformation: any story has an impact on whoever receives it. It can be large and involve a radical or tiny transformation and last for a very short time compared to the end of the story. The transformation can consist in adopting a new behaviour, a new point of view or even a different mood.

7. Neural Coupling and Mirror Neuron System

Some neuroscience research has shown that it is possible to evaluate the effectiveness of storytelling from a biological and cerebral point of view. In a recent study, Uri Hasson (Hasson 2016), a neuroscientist at Princeton University, recorded the brain activity of a subject narrating a tale from real life and other subjects who listened to the narrative of this story. The analysis was carried out using the fmRI – functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging – which scanned and recorded the mental activity of the subjects involved in the study. The results showed that during the story, the brains of the speaker and listeners reasoned according to shared and temporally aligned patterns: a phenomenon called neural coupling. The brains performed the same type of activity demonstrating a cerebral alignment both when the story was told and when the story was listened to thus delineating the following pattern:

1. It was widespread and did not only concern the auditory cortices but also the linguistic and extralinguistic areas of the brain;

2. It occurred both between the brain of the speaker and those of the listeners and between the brains of the listeners themselves;

3. It emerged only when verbal communication took place between the interlocutors.

Furthermore, researchers conducted the same analysis in another language. The listeners could not understand the story and "coupling" between

the brains was quantitatively irrelevant: this means that the process of neural coupling depends not only on auditory stimulation but, above all, on the possibility for the listener to understand and process the information communicated to them. Furthermore, the neural coupling process facilitates the elaboration, assimilation, and memorization of the story. The listeners compared the story to their own personal experiences, connected it to their own memories, and transformed it through their own ideas. In this regard, Woodside's theory appears to be relevant. According to his theory a story is effective because it contains a series of "indexes" that allow the recipients of the story to make comparisons with previous experiences and therefore to remember them more easily. They can be decisions, places, conclusions, actions, and attitudes and are described as points of contact that are established between those who tell and those who listen and those who cause an awareness and an emotional connection among them. Other research carried out in the field of neuroscience has shown that, when analytical data is received, only the parts of the brain dedicated to linguistic understanding are activated. When a story is communicated the brain is activated in the same way whether we are listening to or reading a story or whether we are living a real experience.[3]

Consequently, this particular characteristic of the brain means that the human being remembers more from storytelling than from reading data or simple facts. The brain, in fact, makes a minimal distinction between a lived experience and a story. The neural coupling process also explains in part the phenomenon of the narrative listening trance previously described: the mental connection that is established between the interlocutors of a story favours the abandonment and the lowering of critical defences on the part of the listener, leading them to totally immerse themselves in the story. In conclusion, therefore, this research shows that storytelling is effective because it favours the creation of a bond, a mental alignment between the subjects involved in the story which makes the story easy to assimilate and remember.

8. Building Emotional Connections

In recent years, we have witnessed an increase in consumption of "hedonistic" products more aesthetically cured and pleasant than those of the past. This trend is directly connected to the experiential aspect of marketing. Since the 1980s, marketing studies have attributed increasing centrality to sensory and emotional performances in the consumption experience. In

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[3] For a deeper understanding consult The Mirror-Neuron System, Giacomo Rizzolatti and Laila Craighero. <http://psych.colorado.edu/~kimlab/Rizzolatti.annurev.neuro.2004.pdf> (05/2019).

purchasing processes, in fact, the association between emotions and brands is the primary objective of many companies' marketing campaigns, and this involves a considerable economic investment. Unlike traditional marketing, Marketing 2.0 and 3.0 attribute a primary role to the customer experience and consequently to the emotions aroused during this phase.

It is possible to influence consumer preferences through emotions. Highlighting the perception of certain feelings or thoughts, we create a need that must be satisfied through the purchasing experience. In this way a bond is created and it can generate an emotional dependency between the brand and the consumer. Emotional branding is therefore a fresh, current, highly competitive concept based on the choice of a sign, a colour to use, words to conquer and emotions to communicate. In the melting pot of the digital age, emotional branding becomes essential to succeed especially since passive targets have turned into active stakeholders. Concerning the experiential aspect of the purchase process, Shaw and Ivens (2005) propose the following definition:

The customer experience is the interaction between an organization and its customers. It is a blend of the organization's physical performance, the senses stimulated, and the emotions evoked. Each is intuitively measured against customer expectations across all periods of contact. (Schmitt 2003: 8)

Schmitt distinguishes five types of experience (sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and relational), called strategic experiential modules (Sem) that marketing can create for customers through special practical tools such as communications, visual and verbal identity, product presence, co-branding, spatial environments, web sites and electronic media. Finally, when examining the effectiveness of storytelling as a communication tool, the role of emotions must also be taken into consideration. Besides the natural propensity of humans to think and remember through stories, and the neural coupling phenomenon, stories are effective because they generate emotions. The main objective of a story is precisely to generate an emotional reaction in its recipients and create an emotional connection with them: "whether a break-room anecdote or the storyteller is hoping to evoke emotions in the audience". Some research (Kirwin 2005; Hsu 2008) showed that during the exposure to a story our brain starts producing two hormones: oxytocin and cortisol. Cortisol is related to the ability to focus attention on something important and it is directly related to the level of anxiety. Oxytocin is involved in creating social bonds, empathy, and trust. The combination of these two hormones involves the creation of an emotional connection between the listeners and the storyteller. It is therefore essential for companies to take this aspect into account in order to make it into the mind of the consumer and keep it faithful to the brand. In the current market scenario, in fact, only those brands that manage to create

an emotional connection with their customers survive. In this case, story-telling takes the form of a tool to establish this important connection: "the world's best and most enduring brands are what we like to call storytelling brands" (Papatados 2006: 382).

9. Case Studies

After dealing with the narratological theories, and crossing the boundaries of communication and analysing the theoretical tools that contribute to the creation of successful storytelling, we finally arrive at practical examples. The question behind this empirical research is: what are the ingredients of the best corporate narratives? And is it possible to identify a common base for effective storytelling projects? We analysed two case studies: an Italian and a French case. The reason for this choice depended mainly on three factors: the enormous immediate success after their diffusion; they have been inspirational for many authors and following cases and they both have a strong emotional impact on the public.

The first case dates back to 2014, while the second case dates back to 2013. These are two recent cases have quickly become classics in the sector, as they gave us the opportunity to understand better the level of narrativization in communication today. On the other hand this analysis indicates the path taken by big brands and the agencies that work for them. The narrative complexity of the cases is different in terms of narrative design. We will start with the simpler one.

9.1 Wind: "più vicini, più valore alle parole"

The first case examined is a short film published in 2014 on the occasion of the fourth instalment of the institutional campaign of Wind, a leading telecommunications company in Italy. The advertising was edited entirely by the agency, Ogilvy & Mather, Italy. The short film was directed by Giuseppe Capotondi, and the producer was Mercurio Cinematografica. The intended audience for this film is Italian. An Italian brand commissioned the work to an international agency that has been rooted in our country for half a century. It was intended for a purely Italian public (at least initially). Before moving on to the analysis of the spot and the back-engineering of the case, it is necessary to introduce some information and considerations on the agency that created it and on the company that commissioned it.

On August 25, 2014, the first short film by Wind was released on the web, directed by the famous advertising director, Giuseppe Capotondi with chief creative officers, Giuseppe Mastromatteo and Paolo Iabichino, creative clients director, Giordano Curreri (art director), Marco Geranzani (copywriter) and Silvia Sgarbi. The Production company was Mercurio Cinemato-

grafica, and post production was edited by Corte 11 (video) and Top Digital (audio). The telecommunications company announced the release of the short film on their official website with this release:

After talking about transparency, clarity, and simplicity, Wind realizes his fourth institutional episode, to tell the most important value on which the brand is based: proximity. To really talk to each other it is sometimes necessary to meet face to face, one in front of the other. Wind launches this message with a real piece of cinema, a moving and delicate short film that invites everyone to stay closer and communicate more with the heart because sometimes a meeting is better than any mail or phone call. Because technology is powerful, but not omnipotent. On the other hand, the theme is universal and highly topical: in recent years there has been a lively debate on the consequences of increasingly pervasive technology in people's lives and affections. With this campaign, we want to be closer to people and to the truth of their feelings than ever. Thus, in the film, it happens that the protagonist decides to travel to talk to his father who has not seen for some time. If you are thinking of really talking to someone you care about, look at this little piece of cinema.

The short film shot by Giuseppe Capotondi, a famous video clip author for internationally renowned artists, is in effect a small piece of cinema. The video, which lasts about 4 minutes, was filmed for the fourth institutional campaign of Wind, and was published on the official website of the Wind group in August 2014. It was a great success not only among the social media audience but also among traditional media. Wind chose to release the video for the web alone. This was a new dynamic compared to the usual 30-second spot or other more conventional campaign modes. On the website of the communication agency, Ogilvy & Mather, we read that a version for television was shot later and that it was shown at the cinema. The commercial won numerous awards as a short film at the Eurobest and the Epica Awards: Special Prize as Best Institutional Campaign of the year, a gold medal in the Viral/Mobile Marketing category and a silver medal in Brand Content/Entertainment at the 2015 NC Awards.

The video speaks of closeness and does so using delicate tones and shades. The soundtrack is a piece by The Cinematic Orchestra entitled *How to Build a Home* and fits in perfectly with the mood of the video and the message of the campaign. The reference soundtrack plays an important role in the construction of tension within the spot. In the spot you can hear, from the beginning, a series of long chords, played by a piano and mixed with the sounds of nature. The abundant pauses used as "breaths" prepare for an ever-increasing crescendo, where an arpeggio on the chords and the entry of the voice excel on the scene. Following a long pause. The strings reproduce the main chords and the piano, with regular sounds and recreates the impression of a falling drops of water. The emotional expectation increases, the piano arpeggio starts again, the sound of the drops disappears, and the strings grow until they completely dominate the piano.

The protagonist of the film is trying to contact his father. In fact throughout the ad, he tries to contact him through three different ways: a phone call, a text message, and an email. The word we read on the device screens is always the same: 'dad'.[4] The protagonist is a man who relives his relationship with his father through memories of the past; memories that echo everyday actions, alternating with vain attempts to get back in touch with his father. The young man is not satisfied and seeks a more authentic contact with his father. He longs for the physical closeness that characterized his childhood and adolescence. After the third unsuccessful attempt he decides to leave and takes a plane and heads for his childhood home, arrives there, and finds his father. This is the synopsis of the commercial, but the details that contributed to its success deserve a more detailed discussion. The spot is based on contrasts: proximity and distance, past and present, rural landscapes and urban landscapes, the desire to leave the protagonist as a young man and the desire to return to the adult protagonist. The flashbacks of life spent in the birthplace of his parents alternate with scenes of current life in a distant city. The detail of the foreign city are made explicit in one of the first shots, when the figure of the protagonist walking among the fields as a child alternates with the scene of the adult protagonist who wanders the streets of London (the film includes a shot of a typical red, London double-decker bus). This *incipit in medias res* allows the reader to immediately deduce the nostalgic mood of the whole affair and, thanks to the immediate recognition of the red double-decker bus, the distance between the protagonists is emphasized geographically and physically.

The flashbacks portray moments of lightheartedness between the two: the games in the middle of the cornfields; the father saying good night to his son; the two playing on bicycles. There are also moments of tension between the two as the child grows and becomes the typical rebellious adolescent impatient with parental authority.

The son decides to remedy this physical distance (which also corresponds to an emotional distance that modern technologies cannot fill), and takes a plane, returning to his father's house. The director lingers on a detail that takes up the theme of contrast, dear to this type of narration: the camera frames the gate at home for a long time and within a few seconds the images of the teenager's hasty escape alternate quickly with those of the return to home longed for by the adult son. The element of strong continuity between the two dimensions is given by the gate (the element which has remained the same) and by the almost identical clothes worn in both situations. The desire to feel a caress or a hug or hear the warm nuances of a familiar voice cannot be transmitted through an email, a text message, or a phone call. Sometimes

[4] "Papà".

more is needed. We need a greater effort rewarded by an equally greater satisfaction, that of meeting and getting closer. The final shots portray the two at sea, many years before and after. The choice of the sea is not random, of course. The sea is a powerful and beautiful symbol. The symbolic meaning of the sea is very broad. The sea represents, first of all, the unconscious and (in a wider and Jungian perspective also the collective Unconscious), that is a reservoir of energies in which all our impulses, and the impulses of those that surround us flow together. This is why the sea always has an enormous significance. The sea is also a symbol and source of life. Besides this, the fact that the protagonists find themselves immersed in the sea, half-naked also indicates a return to their origins, and to the essential. The lack of clothes lowers every barrier between people, the superstructures give way, and it is natural in every way.

The importance in the context of storytelling of this "little piece of cinema" is remarkable, and it is possible to draw useful ideas from this for narratives in general. In this case, telling the story is more important than selling a product. The story told is not that of the brand, but that of its readers. For this reason, we create a level of empathy in the reader thanks to a careful and very detailed study of the public (or target, to use a term dear to marketing) that allow us to talk about stereotypical stories. The core story is built on the need of readers. As mentioned earlier in this work, empathy emerge in the reader using the narratives' conflict systems (based on adversity, challenges, and conflicts). This type of narration is completely missing in a certain type of canonical communication.

On this occasion, Wind and the communication agency in charge of the work consciously chose not to make any reference to the brand or to the product during the entire spot. Only at the end does the Wind brand logo appear with an effective sentence that bears the message's content. What emerges from this type of narrative is that apparently the brand decides to take a step behind and to tell a story, not just try to sell the product.

The message that this short film conveys is innovative. A telecommunications company that transmits a message that focuses on the value of proximity and the real plan to the detriment of technology and the media is undoubtedly innovative and upstream. As stated by Wind in the statement released following the launch of the commercial: "technology is powerful but not omnipotent." The protagonist's choice is functional to the narrative discourse; a man who represents the cluster of population born in a pre-digital era and who therefore knows the difference in value between now and the previous decades. The message is addressed above all to that slice of readers who exploit the benefits of smartphones and modern technologies, but who have known the world and built their wealth of experiences and emotions in a different context. The numbers indicate that the construction of this narrative and the communication campaign associated with it work. The cam-

paign has achieved more than two million views on the internet, including about 40,000 shares on Facebook, and has won countless awards. It led to the creation of a film and TV program that was presented in primetime on Canale 5 and Rai 1 on March 20, 2015 on the occasion of Father's Day preceded by a special wish from the then CEO of Wind Maximo Ibarra.

9.2 Léon Vivien. Facebook 1914

The second case study analysed for its peculiarity and for the great success achieved in a very short time is that of "Lèon Vivien, Facebook 1914" dating back to 2013. It is a French case, commissioned by a agency, DDB Paris, a French division of the international agency. From the point of view of storytelling design, it is a somewhat more complex case than the first example. In the first case, the spot spread in video format via the web, while in the second, a social network was used as the main medium. The team behind Léon Vivien's campaign was composed of Alexandre Herve, Vice President & Executive Creative Director; Jean-Francois Bouchet, Copywriter; Emmanuel Courteau Art Director; Marion Meyer and Jean-Christophe Graebling, Community Manager. DDB stands for Doyle Dane Bernbach and is one of the most important advertising agencies in the world. It was founded in 1949 in New York, by James Edwin Doyle, Maxwell Dane, and William Bernbach. Since 1986 it has been part of the multinational Omnicom Group Inc and has offices all over the world. In 2005, the city of Meaux acquired an exceptional collection of over 50,000 objects related to the Great War and decided to build a museum to enhance its history. The museum of the Great War has a rich and diversified collection that includes technical and military plans, complete uniforms of most of the fighting countries, weapons and artillery, heavy machinery, objects of daily life used at the front, and in the domestic environment, in addition to many documents and a wide range of works of art. The richness and the size of the Museum makes it among the first of its kind. The Museum's clientele is rather specialized. It is based exclusively on a scholastic public or rather *âgée*. About a year and a half after its inauguration (in 2011), the museum's managers and the DDB communication agency took the situation in hand. In fact, they realized that they had no contact medium within their customers and worked well below the real potential of the museum. Well aware of being in possession of an enormous narrative heritage made up of correspondence, photographs, and other objects representing people who lived about a century before, they decided to try a different strategy. They created and developed a Facebook page that represented the name and history of one of the museum's characters: Léon Vivien. The slogan accompanying the video's opening shot is: Imagine that Facebook had existed in 1914. What would we have seen?

Leon Vivién' story was chosen among all the stories in the Museum. A 29 years old teacher had to leave to fight at the front leaving his young preg-

nant wife named Madeleine at home. On the Facebook page, presented in all respects as a profile, states, posts, screen shots of some fictitious comments created *ad hoc* by Lèon's relatives interacting with him are inserted. The comments, mostly, are excerpts taken from the correspondence between Lèon and his family. The campaign experiment lasted about twelve months. The first post was published on June 28th 1914, the date on which the archduke, Franz Ferdinand, was assassinated in Sarajevo, thus creating the cause of the WWI. Since that day, the posts published by Léon portray a worried man who takes care of his affections in view of his imminent departure. Lèon's best friend is killed at the front in October of the same year. The pain of losing his friend is documented punctually on the FB page, as would be the case for any other young person registered on the social network. All posts are dated 1914 or 1915 and, scrolling through the chronology, it is not possible to trace the real data, except through the comments of the fans of the page. After about five months of military training, on April 10, 1915, Leon left for the front. There are about ten characters revolving around the figure of Léon documented on the Facebook page including his wife, in-laws, and close friends. With an average of five posts a day, his updates are extremely realistic: the young man writes to his loved ones before going to fight and during the war, while he remembers the anecdotes of the past as a teacher. Although the character is not real, the creative experts of the Musée de la Grande Guerre in Paris did a masterful job of digitizing the documentation in their possession, under the supervision of the historian Jean-Pierre Verney. Thousands of users have been swept by history, writing thousands of comments and asking for more details about what happened. The direction of the Musée de la Grande Guerre makes this point very clear: the answers to the story of Léon (and many others like him) are found inside the museum.

The thing that immediately stands out is the accuracy with which the material is inserted and updated in a media context like that of Facebook. The richness of the contents, the precision with which they are uploaded to the social network, and the credibility with which the page is presented, contributed to its success. Engagement was very high, with the page becoming viral. In addition to concern for the fate of the protagonist and empathy towards the couple, waiting for their first child, there is more. Elements of daily life at the front are documented in first person by Léon. The photos that were previously exhibited in a display case of the museum are animated by the words of those who experienced it in all its drama and crudeness. The everyday life at the front reached so many people thanks to the empathy and interest that Léon's personal stories have aroused on the social network. Through the Facebook profile, page fans can share Léon's thoughts and moods: terror in the face of death, the transience of life, comrades who fall under enemy blows, the suffering which ensued when burying comrades who lost their lives due to a noisy card game. The sensitive soul of Léon and

his reflections move and share a different kind of audience, not specialized or scholastic, but a wider readership. Faced with the bombing and rubble of a war home, Léon's soul melts and he gets to share his feelings by writing:

> I can't help thinking about the people who lived in this house. Children were born here; their cries and their voices filled this house; their laughter echoed within the walls. No one will now climb those stairs to reassure them and cuddle them at the end of the day.[5]

The page grew exponentially, and the case became internationally famous. Hundreds of posts revolve around the life of the protagonist, and a single question that keeps the followers of the page in suspense: will Léon be able to return home to his loved ones? Will he meet his son? After about ten months from the start of the campaign, a post was published that none of the fans wanted to read: Léon passed away. The reactions of the followers of the page were immediate and heated. The death of the elementary school teacher is lived for the second time a hundred years after the real one occurred at the front. This second death was mediatic: it involved people from all over the world and touched many hearts.

The case became something more than an advertising campaign, it became a means to bring awareness to new generations. Many aspects of this case are significant from a storytelling perspective and for the aim of this paper. Every brand, like every individual, has a narrative capital to recognize and value. Corporate Storytelling must look for a point of contact with new audiences and readers according to their media consumption habits. Any story can be declined and re-updated on multiple media as Umberto Eco has previously stated. The amazing results achieved by this campaign lead us to think that this may be a good choice in terms of Corporate Storytelling and Social Media Marketing. Léon Vivien's Facebook page grew by about 50,000 fans in only the first two weeks. And more than nine million people around the world have heard of this story thanks to the spread on the web. The museum had an increase in visits of around 45% over six months after the page went live. These empirical data are very important because they indicate the success of an online campaign that ended up reaching the goal and transposing its success even off-line. In real life about 45% more people have physically visited the Great War Museum. Furthermore, the video shot for the campaign was broadcasted by the Superintendency National in French Studies and Léon's story and his Facebook profile have also been turned into a traditional book.

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[5] For further acknowledge consult Musée de la Grande Guerre Du Pays de Meaux: Facebook 1914 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qz4E9iBZJf0> (05/2019).

10. Conclusion

From the present work and the analysis of the case studies it can be seen how storytelling has an increasingly pervasive role within organization's communication strategies. The digital and cultural revolution brought about by social media has led to a consequential transformation in the role of the consumer. The most far-sighted and prudent companies have included within their teams, experts in social media marketing and social media content who, using and creating new specific tools, are able to monitor consumers feedback in real time according to the actions taken by companies and their advertising campaigns. Due to the speed and media diffusion of certain medial contents, companies must find new and disruptive ways of expression. One of these is represented by Corporate Storytelling, a natural transformation of the ancient methods of transmission of human culture. Arousing empathy and emotions as in the case studies analySed, are the predominant methods of reaching audiences. The interest in the dynamics related to narration and to their ancestral efficacy has found an increasingly large space in recent years. The economy of the symbolic has taken hold and has shown that classical management methods are now obsolete for the management of the internal and external communication processes of the company. Storytelling is therefore able to combine corporate communication according to the criteria of the emotional branding, creating a symbolic universe that represents the brands.

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