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***The Essence of a Story:  
when a person becomes a brand***

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ἦ θαυματα πολλά, καί πού τι καὶ βροτῶν φάτις ὑπὲρ τὸν ἀλαθῆ λόγον  
δεδαιδαλμένοι ψεύδεσι ποικίλοις\* ἔξαπατῶντι μῦθοι

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## *Introduzione*

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Il presente elaborato di tesi ha ad oggetto un'analisi della marca quale risorsa chiave per l'impresa, in particolare l'importanza della narrazione, nello specifico quale racconto di sé stessi, per creare ed accrescere il valore di un brand.

L'elaborato sarà suddiviso in cinque capitoli, rispettivamente:

- Capitolo Primo: storytelling, corporate storytelling, storytelling applicato al marketing;
- Capitolo Secondo: *web storytelling* e *visual storytelling*;
- Capitolo Terzo: *human branding*;
- Capitolo Quarto: esperienze di *storytelling*: Chiara Ferragni Collection per Chiara Ferragni e The Ferragnez e CR7 per Cristiano Ronaldo;
- Capitolo Quinto: esperienze di *storytelling*: domanda di ricerca e analisi dei dati.

Il **primo capitolo** offre un quadro di come lo *storytelling* storicamente è nato e si è sviluppato nel tempo, partendo da modalità basilari di narrazione (storie, fiabe, miti), fino ad arrivare alla realtà attuale. Il punto di partenza è l'individuazione delle origini del racconto in senso ampio, da non confondere con la "storia" intesa quale racconto di fatti ed eventi nella loro sequenza cronologica.

Per definire meglio i confini dello *storytelling* si utilizza una classificazione fondata su quattro elementi principali che lo caratterizzano:

- il messaggio;
- il conflitto;
- i personaggi;
- la trama.

Inoltre, vengono delineate le tre funzioni dello storytelling, ovvero la funzione pubblica, la funzione individuale ed infine quella relazionale (Giorgino, Mazzù, 2018).

Vengono evidenziate le cosiddette 6S+1 dello *storytelling*, classificazione proposta da Fontana per individuare le costanti della narrazione, che consistono in: lo *storyteller*, lo *story-architect*, *story-listener*, la *story*, il *set*, lo *show*. Oltre questi viene, in realtà, descritta anche un'ulteriore figura che è quella dello *story-holder*, che entra in azione quando il pubblico diventa co-creatore di racconti (Fontana, 2016).

La ricostruzione effettuata prende in considerazione gli schemi e i modelli narrativi elaborati dai più importanti autori che si sono interessati alla tematica: Propp, Campbell, Vogler, Booker.

Dopo aver esaminato il quadro generale descritto, l'elaborato si focalizza sulla valenza del *brand storytelling*, partendo dalla descrizione di come la comunicazione attraverso un racconto sia in grado di influenzare il

consumatore e quindi di attrarlo e legarlo al marchio. Quindi, si analizzano più specificamente le applicazioni dello *storytelling* al Marketing, ripercorrendo anche per questo aspetto le evoluzioni storiche a cui si è assistito. Come è stato messo in luce nel contesto attuale “*il Marketing non riguarda più solo le cose che fai, ma le storie che racconti*” (Godin, 2005).

Una storia è sempre il racconto orale o scritto di episodi ed esperienze, passati o presenti, che coinvolgono uno o più soggetti e si può definire come una serie di eventi posti in un ordine specifico con un inizio, uno svolgimento ed una fine (Salmon, 2008). Come notato, lo *storytelling* non significa raccontare storie, anche perchè non esiste una locuzione italiana che traduca al meglio questo concetto. Si è ipotizzato di tradurre il termine con “parlare o dire attraverso un racconto”. Non significa dunque semplicemente raccontare storie, ma costruire racconti. La storia è una cronologia, il racconto invece è una rappresentazione (Fontana, Mieli, 2014).

In particolare, la storia di un marchio implica una cornice realistica o fittizia nella quale il *brand* può essere inquadrato per spiegare qualcosa legato al fondatore, agli *highlights* e crisi, alla missione ai valori, ai benefici funzionali ed emozionali, ed all’eredità del marchio (Salmon, 2008).

Quindi, si arriva all’aspetto più rilevante del racconto di marca, che risiede nel *corporate storytelling*, che implica dimensioni multiple (individualistica, socio-organizzativa, legale/regolatoria). Le diverse declinazioni dello *storytelling* d’impresa mostrano come in tale ambito la narrazione risponde a finalità molteplici ed assume un’importanza via via crescente.

Particolare risalto è dato alla descrizione dello schema individuato da Nguyen basato su cinque elementi (*Glue, Reward, Emotion, Authentic, Target*) che danno luogo al modello G.R.E.A.T., ritenuto di grande utilità per i *marketers* per l’elaborazione di storie con le quali i consumatori sono in grado di identificarsi e sentirsi partecipi.

L’analisi tende dunque a dimostrare come lo strumento della storia rappresenti una fondamentale modalità di valorizzazione del brand, che affonda le radici in periodi storici ormai lontani, ma che grazie soprattutto ai nuovi strumenti digitali e all’evoluzione tecnologica ha potuto e continuerà ad avere un ampliamento e uno sviluppo di tutte le potenzialità.

Il **secondo capitolo**, infatti, analizza proprio l’impatto della narrazione mediante strumenti digitali, poiché la crescita e la diffusione non solo dei media tradizionali come televisione, radio e stampa, ma soprattutto dei media digitali, ed in particolare di *Internet* e a maggior ragione dei *social networks*, ha segnato un passaggio cruciale nello sviluppo dello *storytelling* applicato al *Marketing*.

Vengono illustrate le caratteristiche del *transmedia storytelling* che consente mediante l’uso di una pluralità di diverse piattaforme digitali di implementare e sviluppare la narrazione. L’introduzione dei dispositivi mobili ha accelerato ulteriormente tale processo, che era stato avviato dalla diffusione di *Internet*, contribuendo allo sviluppo di nuove strategie di comunicazione e creando un ambiente in cui lo *storytelling* permette di diffondere

con sempre maggiore frequenza le storie. Si tratta di conseguenze del nuovo ruolo assunto dal consumatore nella gestione dei media: non più spettatore passivo, ma partecipante attivo in un processo in cui gli è consentita accessibilità costante alla storia. Sotto tale profilo, impatto fondamentale è giocato da media quali *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Snapchat*, *Twitter*, che hanno radicalmente alterato la percezione di come le storie vengono narrate ed il ruolo dell'*audience* nella narrazione.

L'efficacia di un progetto transmediale nell'accrescimento di *engagement* verso il pubblico dipende da una pluralità di fattori e generalmente si ritiene che la stessa storia debba essere diffusa su almeno tre diverse piattaforme. Ulteriormente è necessaria la considerazione del costo, dell'accessibilità, della funzionalità, della rilevanza e del valore dell'intrattenimento per il consumatore.

L'uso del *digital storytelling* assume rilevanza cruciale nel marketing, essendo lo scopo quello di innescare il coinvolgimento e la *purchase intention* dei clienti. Ciò nonostante, non sono evidenziati unicamente vantaggi nell'applicazione del *digital storytelling* al marketing (*connection*, *identity*, *brand identification*, *brand image*, *application*), ma anche alcuni svantaggi, che possono minarne l'efficacia. Difatti, tra gli errori più comuni sono segnalati l'uso di messaggi contraddittori o confusi, di menzogne, l'uso di toni inappropriati, il provocare reazioni forzate.

Con l'uso di strumenti digitali lo *storytelling* beneficia di un fattore molto importante per il coinvolgimento del pubblico, cioè l'impatto della comunicazione visiva. Difatti, l'uso delle immagini rende chiaramente più efficace la narrazione.

Lo strumento visivo e le immagini semplificano la comunicazione, così consentendo strategie di *Marketing* incentrate sui *social media*. L'analisi della tesi è essenzialmente rivolta al *social media* che nell'ultimo decennio ha registrato l'*exploit* più rilevante e formidabile, *Instagram*, che proprio sulla sua natura principalmente visiva ha costruito il proprio successo. Come si dimostrerà, le funzionalità che tale applicazione consente ai propri users ed utenti rappresenta uno dei fattori che lo rendono tanto indicato come strumento di narrazione. Quindi, il passo verso la centralità di *Instagram*, scavalcando *social media* già in passato attivi e diffusi quali *Facebook*, *Youtube*, *Twitter* ecc., nell'ambito delle strategie di *Marketing* delle aziende più lungimiranti, che proprio grazie a questa scelta hanno avuto un impatto incredibilmente positivo sulle vendite, è stato breve.

Un'ipotesi speciale ed emblematica di come la narrazione incide sulla rappresentazione e sulla visione della persona, quindi sulla percezione che della persona si ha all'esterno, è il *personal storytelling*. Questo ha avuto sempre un grande potere, a maggior ragione in una realtà quale quella attuale in cui le nuove tecnologie di comunicazione consentono, soprattutto grazie ai *social media*, di ampliare in modo inimmaginabile la cerchia di soggetti a cui la storia viene comunicata.

Si ha riprova dell'importanza di una narrazione quotidiana proprio nei casi (soprattutto in quello principale che verrà esaminato) che saranno oggetto di analisi.

Il **terzo capitolo**, prima di prendere in esame i casi da cui emerge un'applicazione concreta di quanto teorizzato in relazione allo *storytelling* applicato al *brand*, ed in particolare per quanto riguarda la narrazione di marca, analizza i processi di umanizzazione del *brand* (*Human Branding*), che hanno avuto rilevante impatto sul *Marketing* ed in particolare su quello svolto *online* attraverso i *social networks*. Lo *Human Branding* è strettamente connesso al *Personal Branding*, e questo processo in cui l'individuo diventa *brand*, trova il suo culmine grazie all'uso dei *social media*. A maggior ragione, nel caso di individui che diventano *brand*, si è assistito ad un fenomeno definito come *brand love*, per cui si intende un atteggiamento particolarmente positivo nei confronti di un brand che incarna le emozioni, il comportamento e le percezioni dei consumatori, con un impatto profondo su concetti legati al *brand*, quali la *brand loyalty* e la comunicazione *WOM*.

L'uso dello *Human Branding* nel *Marketing* è destinato ad incrementare anche in ragione dell'uso che ne viene fatto dalle *celebrities*. Soprattutto, ha influito su una certa visione dei *brand* come "umani", il fenomeno della cd. antropomorfizzazione, in virtù del quale al marchio vengono attribuite qualità umane e un impulso all'uso di questa tecnica di comunicazione di marketing, è dato da piattaforme di *social media* come *Instagram*. Inoltre, la possibilità di dare veste umana ai *brand* consente lo sviluppo di relazioni tra i consumatori e i marchi stessi, nell'ottica di una tendenza diffusa ad attribuire caratteristiche, comportamenti, motivazioni, stadi mentali ed emozioni tipicamente umani ad oggetti, che sono agenti non umani. L'instaurazione di relazioni tra il consumatore ed il *brand* è la molla per generare *brand value*, soprattutto in un contesto saturato da informazioni quale è attualmente *Internet*, nell'ambito del quale la creazione di contenuti unici quali quelli caricati sui *social media* contribuisce ad aumentare l'importanza nella creazione di valore per i *brand*.

Quando ci si trova di fronte ad un "brand umano", soprattutto, nella forma dei cd. *influencer* e delle *celebrities* di *Instagram* si pone la necessità di verificare quali sono i tratti che contraddistinguono tali situazioni rispetto a quello che accade per gli utenti medi di *Instagram*. Per tali motivi, viene svolta anche un'analisi specifica, sia demografica che per aree geografiche, per genere, per età, per estrazione sociale, volta a fare luce sulle caratteristiche degli utenti "medi" di *Instagram*. Difatti, anche mediante uno studio sui *driver* che incentivano all'uso di *Instagram*, vengono posti a confronto coloro che, attraverso tale strumento si limitano ad un'interazione con i *brand*, rispetto a soggetti che, invece, hanno fatto di *Instagram* uno strumento chiave della loro attività: i cd. *influencer*, soggetti che hanno acquisito l'abilità e il potere di indirizzare gli acquirenti potenziali di un prodotto o di un servizio promuovendo o raccomandando gli articoli attraverso i *social media*. Le due figure dell'utente "medio" e degli *influencer*, ancora, non evidenziano appieno gli effetti e i contorni di come la narrazione di marca, intesa come narrazione del personaggio che incarna il *brand* incidono sulla *purchase intention* del consumatore.

Difatti, il fulcro dell'analisi consiste nelle differenze esistenti rispetto alle *celebrities*, in quanto associate a notorietà e straordinarietà di cui le altre figure indicate sono prive.

Anche il concetto di *celebrity* ha avuto una sua evoluzione, poiché si è assistito ad una trasformazione dalle

celebrità “tradizionali”, il cui ruolo era principalmente quello di modelli a cui ispirarsi e con cui porsi a confronto, verso una concezione di *celebrity* rivoluzionata dall’uso dei *social network*.

Grande rilevanza ha l’*appeal* della *celebrity*, caratteristica su cui ruota la *brand personality*, e che influisce in modo fondamentale sulle aspettative dei consumatori. Senza dimenticare che l’*appeal* è ciò che può determinare l’ascesa o la caduta di una *celebrity*.

In particolare, si parte dal ruolo delle *celebrity* come *endorser* di prodotti, che è l’attività più diffusa basata sull’influenza delle loro personalità. Gli studi relativi si sono focalizzati sui concetti di familiarità, attrazione, credibilità, competenza, e sull’efficacia della promozione di *brand* e prodotti attraverso *celebrities*, ma anche e soprattutto sull’attaccamento dei consumatori alle *celebrities testimonial* di *brand*.

Il successivo sviluppo ha visto la percezione delle *celebrities* spostarsi sul loro valore come *Human Brands*, nel senso di essere identificate nei marchi sponsorizzati, fino a giungere ad un processo di collaborazione per lo sviluppo del proprio personal *brand*. L’evoluzione è stata segnata dall’uso dei *social media*, ed in modo cruciale da *Instagram*, strumento il cui uso è divenuto talmente popolare nella categoria, da aver rivoluzionato anche le dinamiche attuali di *brand storytelling*.

Dunque, terreno fertile per lo sviluppo di *Human Brands* sono stati i *social media*, sia per le *celebrities* tradizionali che per gli *influencer*, manifestando tuttavia evidenti differenze che sono messe in luce nella mia tesi.

Il **capitolo quarto**, infatti, si concentra sui due *brand* che in modo più significativo rappresentano come la narrazione di marca tramite *Instagram*, ed in particolare la narrazione della vita privata e quotidiana di chi incarna questi *brand*, Chiara Ferragni e Cristiano Ronaldo siano stati fondamentali per far raggiungere risultati eccezionali a livello di vendite e di notorietà.

Proprio questi brand sono la manifestazione tangibile di come gli strumenti di *Marketing* digitale riflettono il bisogno dei consumatori di avere un contatto più diretto ed autentico con i *brand*, superando le forme tradizionali di *advertising*, oramai divenute inadeguate. I *brand* indicati hanno in comune molti aspetti, prima di tutto il fatto di essere *Human Brands*, e di puntare sullo *storytelling* come forma di *Personal Branding*.

Sicuramente il caso più emblematico è quello di Chiara Ferragni, la cui ascesa da semplice *fashion blogger*, ad *influencer* di fama mondiale, ed infine a musa per milioni di *followers*, l’ha portata nell’arco di meno di un decennio ad essere addirittura inserita dalla rivista *Forbes* nella sua lista “30 under 30” delle figure più influenti nel mondo del *business* nell’anno 2015, nonché ad essere oggetto di un *Case Study* alla *Harvard Business School*. Quanto sia imprescindibile per il successo e la *purchase intention* dei consumatori del *brand Chiara Ferragni Collection* la narrazione personale che quotidianamente la sua creatrice compie, è un dato inconfutabile, soprattutto grazie a come viene utilizzato *Instagram*, che va bene aldilà della semplice pubblicazione di immagini che mostrano prodotti e li promuovono, come potrebbe fare un *influencer* qualunque.

L'altro *brand* che incarna il suo creatore è *CR7*, fondato dal grande campione Cristiano Ronaldo, la cui sfera di influenza va ben oltre il mondo del calcio, essendo riuscito a distinguersi non solo come atleta e *testimonial* di vari brand, ma soprattutto come *Human Brand* e creatore del marchio *CR7*. Il grande successo che ha caratterizzato tutte le iniziative che ruotano attorno al calciatore, sono andate oltre al semplice endorsement di altri famosi *top brands*, portando il suo *personal brand* a diventare la sua principale fonte di successo finanziario. In tal modo Cristiano Ronaldo ha sfruttato un impatto nei *social media* impressionante, che lo ha portato a raccogliere complessivamente più di 350 milioni di *followers*, rendendolo il personaggio più popolare di *Instagram*. Questa notorietà rappresenta proprio l'ingrediente principale che gli ha consentito di sviluppare un *personal brand* che sullo *storytelling* ha costruito la propria rilevanza, accresciuta ancor di più nel momento in cui è divenuto un calciatore della Juventus.

Nel **capitolo quinto** vengono riportati gli esiti delle analisi svolte, ed illustrati i contenuti della ricerca qualitativa, che mi ha consentito di sottoporre delle interviste semi-strutturate a tre diverse categorie professionali, tutte a titolo diverso, idonee a fornire un loro punto di vista sui temi di ricerca, basandosi sulle attività svolte e sull'esperienza acquisita. Si tratta sia di *influencer*, che di esperti del settore, nonché di un *Partner McKinsey*.

Attraverso lo strumento delle interviste qualitative, che hanno previsto domande formulate *ad hoc* in relazione al campo di attività di ciascun soggetto interpellato, è stato possibile ottenere interessanti evidenze dell'efficacia dell'uso della narrazione del *brand* tramite *Instagram* e le *IG stories* sulla *purchase intention*, verificando se si tratta di un aspetto che, in casi diversi da quelli di studio presentati nel quarto capitolo, potrebbe risultare altrettanto decisivo.

Vengono presentati i punti chiave che sono emersi dalle interviste qualitative, e dalla ricerca quantitativa descrittiva volta alla identificazione dei *driver* della *purchase intention* nel *brand storytelling*, attuata mediante la sottoposizione di un questionario a cui ha partecipato un campione di 362 persone. Il questionario, oltre ai *brand* analizzati nel quarto capitolo, ha riguardato altri marchi del settore *fashion*, caratterizzati dall'essere il creatore del *brand* anche il personaggio che identifica il *brand* stesso, una celebrità di fama, e pertanto, con la narrazione di sé stesso realizza anche il racconto di marca (KKW beauty, Victoria Beckham, The Attico, S by Serena, Nastygal).

Sulla base dei risultati quantitativi della *survey* analizzati e presi in considerazione sotto il profilo delle loro correlazioni statistiche, vengono mostrate le conclusioni e le implicazioni manageriali che dalla ricerca svolta è possibile trarre.

## *Introduction*

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This thesis is focused on an analysis of the concept of a *brand* as a key resource for a company, and, in particular, the importance of narrative, and *storytelling* more precisely, in the creation of and valuation of a *brand*.

The thesis will be divided into five chapters, respectively:

- Chapter One: *storytelling, corporate storytelling*, storytelling as applied to marketing;
- Chapter Two: *digital storytelling* and *visual storytelling* on social media, focussing on Instagram;
- Chapter Three: *Human branding* and the differences between *celebrities, influencers, average users* of Instagram;
- Chapter Four: *storytelling* case studies: Chiara Ferragni Collection for Chiara Ferragni and The Ferragnez and CR7 for Cristiano Ronaldo;
- Chapter Five: *storytelling* experiences: research and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data.

The **first chapter** gives an overview of *storytelling*, both historically and its more modern iterations, starting from basic narrative structures, including stories, fairy tales, myths, and arriving at the stories which are told digitally by individuals and brands alike on contemporary social media platforms. Working forward from an identification of the origins of storytelling in the broadest possible sense, narrative as applied to personal, relational, and organisational storytelling will be examined in Chapter One. In addition, to better define the boundaries of *storytelling*, a classification system based on the four main elements which characterise the practice are utilised:

- the message;
- the conflict;
- the characters;
- the plot.

Furthermore, the three functions of *storytelling* are outlined, namely: the public function of storytelling; the individual function of storytelling; and, finally, the relational function of storytelling. In Chapter One, additionally, the so-called 6S + 1 of storytelling is highlighted, which encompasses a system of classification proposed to identify narrative constants, which consist of: the *storyteller*, the *story-architect*, the *story-listener*, the *story*, the *set*, and, ultimately, the *show*. The figure of the *story-holder*, which appears when the audience becomes co-creator of stories is also discussed and analysed.

As a theoretical underpinning to the first chapter, the schemes and narrative models developed by preeminent experts in the field of narratology- Propp, Campbell, Vogler, and Booker- have been taken into

consideration. In light of their studies, a story is taken to be the oral or written account of episodes and experiences, past or present, that involve one or more subjects and can be defined as a series of events placed in a specific order within a clearly narrative structure composed of a defined beginning, middle, and end. As has been oft noted, *storytelling* does not mean telling stories or a historical recounting of chronological events, as is such, there is no Italian phrase that best translates this concept. The term, therefore, is translated as being "to talk or tell a story through." Hence, *storytelling* does not simply mean telling stories, but building stories that are the representation of the hidden and visible world: *History is a chronology, but stories are representation.*

Following a thorough examination of the fundamentals of storytelling, we turn to corporate storytelling, and, more specifically, *brand storytelling*, beginning from a description of brand communication facilitated by storytelling and its influence on the consumer, and subsequent tying capabilities. Thus, *storytelling* applications are analysed more specifically in reference to their value to *marketing*, retracing recent historical developments witnessed in the field, which can be summarised in the following quote, "Marketing no longer concerns only what you do, but the stories they tell."<sup>1</sup>

Following which, a discussion of brand storytelling in terms of communicating brand identity, value, and history is entered. In particular, as will be argued, the history of a brand implies a realistic or fictitious frame through which the *brand* can be placed in reference to explain something related to the brand's founder, the highlights and crisis points in its history, its mission, values, functional and emotional benefits, and the heritage of the brand.

Thus, we arrive at the most relevant aspect of brand storytelling, which resides in the concept of *Corporate Storytelling*, a practice which implies multiple dimensions, be they individualistic, socio-organisational, or legal/ regulatory. The different variations of *storytelling* as an enterprise demonstrate the manifold ways in which, in the field of marketing, narrative responds to multiple aims and has taken on an ever increasing importance. In this section, particular emphasis is given to the description of the scheme identified by Nguyen based on five elements - Glue, Reward, Emotion, Authentic, Target- which have given rise to the *GREAT model*, which is considered of great utility for marketers in the elaboration of stories with which consumers are able to identify and feel involved. The analysis, therefore, demonstrates how storytelling, as a marketing tool, represents a fundamental modality for the enhancement of a brand, and which has its roots in the distant past; however, owing to the rise of new digital tools and the technological evolution of the last fifteen years, is a tool with untold potential and room for growth.

The **second chapter** precisely analyses the impact of storytelling using digital tools, beginning with the growth and spread of traditional media such as television, radio and print, in addition to digital media, and, in particular, of the *Internet* and *social networks*, which have marked the inception of a crucial step in the

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<sup>1</sup>Godin S. (2009), *All Marketers are Liars: The Power of Telling Authentic Stories in a Low-Trust World*, Portfolio, U.S.A.

development of storytelling as applied to marketing. The characteristics of *Transmedia*, as applied to storytelling, are examined in light of the plurality of different digital platforms through which to implement and develop narration. The introduction of mobile devices has further accelerated this process, which was initiated by the spread of the *Internet*, helping to develop new communication strategies and creating an environment in which *storytelling* allows for the spread of stories with increasing frequency. The consequences of the new role played by the consumer in managing media production and consumption are also addressed. In particular, the transformation of consumers from passive spectators to active participants, in a process played out on social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Snapchat*, and *Twitter*, which have radically altered the perception of how stories are told and the role of *audience* in narration, will be addressed in Chapter Two. In addition, Chapter Two will examine the effectiveness of a transmedia project in increasing *engagement* with consumers, in light of the plurality of factors which affect engagements, including stories which are spread out and told on a variety of platforms. Furthermore, consideration will be given to the cost, accessibility, functionality, relevance, and value of consumer entertainment, through the lens of digital storytelling.

As will be further discussed, the use of *Digital Storytelling* assumes crucial relevance in contemporary *marketing*, the aim being to trigger consumer involvement, and, subsequently, purchase intention. However, it is not only the benefits of *Digital Storytelling* for marketing which are addressed, the primary advantages being: *connection, identity, brand identification, brand image, application*; the disadvantages of storytelling for marketers are also highlighted, in addition to those factors which can undermine its effectiveness. Thus, the most common errors reported by those working in the field are examined, including: the use of contradictory or confusing messages, lying, the use of inappropriate tone, and the provoking of forced, or otherwise inauthentic, reactions.

As with the use of any sort of digital tools, *storytelling* benefits from the involvement of the public, which is seen most clearly in impact of *visual communication* on storytelling as a means of communication. Indeed, as will be further addressed in Chapter Two, the use of images heightens the effectiveness of storytelling as it simplifies communication, thus allowing marketing strategies focussed on *social media* to flourish. The analytical portion of this thesis is, therefore, essentially aimed at storytelling as it is seen on *social media*, and its most formidable platform of the recent decade, *Instagram*, which has built its success precisely on its fundamentally visual nature. As will be demonstrated, the features that this application allow, one might even say, encourage its *users* to tell their own stories. It is the centrality of *Instagram* in the social media universe, which has overtaken other platforms that were active and widespread in the past, such as *Facebook*, *Youtube*, *Twitter* amongst others, in the context of the *marketing* strategies of the most farsighted companies, that will be the focus on Chapter Two.

The *engagement* created by *social media*, especially through *Instagram*, was nourished, therefore, thanks

to the power of visual narrative was further increased when, in 2018, the application added to its functionality *Instagram Stories*, as well as the possibility of transmitting content in real time via *Instagram Live*. The opportunity to create even more attractive and engaging content for the public, through which to increase *engagement* with consumers, is precisely the function which makes *Instagram* the ideal platform through which to tell stories, for brands and individual users alike. Not only with regards to the *brands* under analysis, *Instagram* represents a modality which allows users to transform their everyday stories into that of a *celebrity*.

In addition, a hypothesis of how narration affects the representation and identity of the individual, and, therefore, the perception of said individual externally and internally, is the driving focus behind the section entitled *Personal Storytelling*. The means by which storytelling has always held great power, and how that power has only intensified in the current world in the wake of the new communication technologies, especially *social media*, in terms of the unimaginably large expansion of the circle of subjects to whom the story is communicated will be addressed. It is the importance of a daily narrative, precisely in the cases mentioned above, that will be the object of analysis in this section.

In advance of Chapter Four, in which the application of the mechanisms of storytelling as applied to a branding context are analysed through case studies, is an examination of the ways in which brands are *anthropomorphised*. *Human branding* serves as the focus for **Chapter Three** in which *human brands* and *anthropomorphised brands* alike are analysed in regard to their impact on marketing, with particular attention given to the manner in which these mechanisms are carried out online by way of social media networks. The creation of human brands is closely related to *personal branding*, and the processes by which an individual becomes a brand. In addition, in relation to human brands, the phenomenon known as *brand love*, wherein consumers hold strongly positive attitudes towards a brand which embodies the emotions, behavior, and perceptions of consumers, with a profound impact on concepts related to branding, such as brand loyalty and WOM communication, is also examined in the third chapter.

The phenomenon of brand anthropomorphisation, by virtue of which the brand is attributed human qualities, has been bolstered by social media platforms, such as Instagram, on which brands who have taken on human-like forms have a heightened ability to develop strong attachments leading to long-standing relationships with consumers. The establishment of relationships between consumers and brands is a springboard for generating *brand value*, especially in an environment as saturated with information as the Internet today, in which the creation of unique *content*, such as that which is uploaded on social media, contributes to an increased importance of creating value for brands. Additionally, it is shown that the use of mechanisms of human branding in marketing are destined to increase due to their favour with celebrities.

When faced with a human brand in its natural habitat, social media platforms essentially, there emerges a clear delineation between those who may be said to embody a personal brand - namely, *influencers* and

*celebrities* - and *average users*. Instagram influencers and celebrities, and the traits they embody, which shape their presence and interactions on Instagram, are analysed in contrast to average Instagram users. For these reasons, a demographic analysis categorised by gender, by age, by social background, along with location is undertaken in Chapter Three, aiming to shed light on the characteristics of the average users of Instagram. In service of which a study of *drivers of Instagram usage*, including interaction with brands, is examined comparing average users to influencers and celebrities, with an emphasis on those subjects who have acquired the ability and power to direct potential buyers of a product or service by promoting or recommending articles through social media. The two figures of the average user and of the influencer, including Insta-celebrities, still, do not fully highlight the effects and contours of how brand storytelling, understood as the narration of a character who embodies a brand, affects consumers' purchase intentions.

By virtue of which, the fulcrum of the analysis undertaken in this thesis consists of an elaboration of the differences which exist between celebrities, and their associated notoriety and exceptionalness, and the vast majority of users of Instagram who can be classified as being average or unexceptional. In addition, the concept of celebrity is taken under consideration in an evolved form, owing to the transformation from "traditional" celebrities, which has been witness in recent years. Within the confines of modern celebrity on social media platform, a contemporary iteration of stardom emerges, in which the traditional role of celebrities as inspirational models and points of comparison is overlaid with modern conceptions of *accessibility* and *engagement*. As is such, great importance is given to the individual appeal of celebrities, a feature on which *brand personality* revolves, and which has a fundamental influence on consumer expectations, as appeal can determine the rise or fall of a celebrity.

Beginning from the conventional role of celebrities as *product endorsers*, which is the most widespread marketing and advertising activity in which celebrities have traditionally been engaged, we look to the insights gleaned from the literature in the field of *celebrity endorsement*. Studies focussed on concepts of familiarity, attraction, credibility, competence, and effectiveness in brand and product promotion by celebrities, and consumers attachment to brands and their famous endorsers alike which are formed when celebrities provide product testimonials in service of their role as celebrity endorsers are touched upon in Chapter Three.

Turning from celebrity endorsement, an analysis of the shifting perception of celebrities and their value as human brands, by virtue of their identification with sponsored brands, resulting in a collaborative process in service of the creation of personal brand is undertaken. This process is marked by the use of social media, Instagram most crucially, a platform and communication tool which can be said to have revolutionised the current dynamics of brand storytelling. Social media, it is argued, is fertile ground for the development of human brands, both for traditionally defined *celebrities* and *influencers* alike.

The fourth chapter, therefore, focusses on two brands which best represent how brand storytelling is

engaged in on Instagram, which particular attention paid to how the narration of the private, everyday life of those who embody these brands is fundamental to achieve exceptional results in terms of sales and reputation. The human brands chosen to serve as the basis of the case studies examined in Chapter Four - Chiara Ferragni and Cristiano Ronaldo - are tangible manifestations of how digital marketing tools reflect the need of consumers to establish more direct and authentic contact with brands, overcoming the constraints and framing of traditional forms of advertising, which have now become inadequate. The brands mentioned above share notable common aspects, primarily stemming from their status as human brands and their requisite focus on storytelling as a form of personal branding as a consequence.

Thus, **Chapter Four** is centred round a thorough analysis of the mechanisms of storytelling, brand building, and the creation of human brands occur on social media platforms, specifically Instagram. To serve as a model of influencer human branding on Instagram, Chiara Ferragni and her associated brands, the Chiara Ferragni Collection and The Ferragnez, are examined. In doing so, Ferragni's ascent for small-time fashion blogger to international renown is examined, tracing the steps which she took to grow her base of followers and to leverage her fame to gain even greater credibility and notoriety in her given field. It is argued that Ferragni, rather than just being an attractive face behind a brand's image, has strategically increased her visibility in the field by internationalising herself and by developing a distinctive brand personality which is both easily recognisable and differs from her competitors in the field.

Certainly the most emblematic case of personal branding amongst influencers on Instagram is that of Chiara Ferragni, whose rise from a mere fashion blogger to world-renowned *influencer*, the muse of millions of followers, has led her be included in *Forbes* "30 under 30," as well as being the subject of a Case Study at Harvard Business School. It is argued that the success of the Chiara Ferragni Collection brand is largely due to the personal narrative that its creator performs every day for her followers on Instagram. It is irrefutable fact, moreover, that owing to the simplicity of the publication of content on Instagram, as is further addressed in Chapter Two, any influencer could engage in this manner of self-promotion; however, Ferragni has made exceptionally effective use of social media, pivoting between platforms when required, in order to increase her sphere of influence to continually larger audiences. As will be further addressed in the first case study of Chapter Four, Ferragni's success on social media is largely due to her abilities as a storyteller, which further helps to shape her image as a likeable, attractive, relatable young businesswoman, wife, and mother, humanising her in the eyes of her followers and lending credibility and authenticity to her endeavours.

By way of contrast, Cristiano Ronaldo, and his CR7 brand serves of the basis of case study two. Unlike Ferragni who has gained fame through her work as a fashion blogger, and is thus a product of the digital environment, Ronaldo's celebrity is a result of his position as one of the greatest living athletes in the world at present. Therefore, it can be said that while Ferragni built her fame by virtue of her online presence, Ronaldo

entered the digital field of play already having amassed a sizable following, and can be seen to have made use of the platform provided by social media networks to further develop his fan base, while strengthening his connection to preexisting fans who travelled with his to the medium. Despite these differences in origins, it is argued that Ronaldo, like Ferragni, is a storyteller of greater competence who has utilised social media to craft a narrative about his life, both public and private, in virtue of the construction of a human brand. To better understand the mechanisms at work behind the influencer and the star athlete's presence on social media, three key factors are analysed: the creation of an origin myth; the development of a distinct brand personality; and the creation of a branded line of products for sale. These three elements of brand building as seen to be engaged in by Chiara Ferragni and Cristiano Ronaldo form the basis of Chapter Four.

CR7, founded by the champion footballer Cristiano Ronaldo, whose sphere of influence goes far beyond the world of sport, having managed to distinguish himself not only as an athlete and endorser of various brands, but, above all, as a human brand. The enormous success which has characterised Ronaldo's initiatives go beyond simple endorsement, and rather are reflective of the way in which the footballer has carefully constructed a personal brand, which has become his main source of financial success. This is due, primarily, to Ronaldo impressive following on social media, on which he has amassed upwards of 350 million million followers across platforms, making him the most popular figure on Instagram as of this year. This notoriety is precisely the main ingredient that has allowed him to develop a personal brand that has built its relevance on storytelling.

It is in **Chapter Five** which the results of the analysis undertaken into consumer purchase intentions, brand perceptions, social media usage, and the effects of storytelling are reported. To this effect, the contents of a qualitative study, complete with research, are illustrated. The aforementioned qualitative studied, which was composed of semi-structured interviews with representative from three different professional categories, each with a different professional title and working in different fields. Of those interviewed, there are a number of influencers and industry experts, as well as a McKinsey partner. Thus, these individuals, based on the activities performed and the experience acquired respectively, have been found suitable to provide their unique point of view on the research topics covered in this thesis. Through qualitative interviews, which provided ad hoc questions in relation to the field of activity of each respondent, it was possible to obtain evidence of the effectiveness of the use of brand narration on Instagram and, specifically, IG stories on consumers' purchase intention, verifying the theoretical contentions made in Chapter Four.

In addition to a qualitative analysis undertaken in the form of interviews with industry experts, descriptive quantitative research is also presented in Chapter Five. This research is aimed at identifying the drivers of the purchase intention brought about by brand storytelling on Instagram. In order to collect sufficient quantitative data, a questionnaire was created analysing a variety of factors which influence purchase intentions, which was then completed by sample of 362 individuals. The questionnaire, in addition to the brands analysed

in Chapter Four, also examines consumer perceptions of a variety of other brands in the fashion sector, which are characterised by being strongly identified with the brands founder, typically a figure with some notoriety, such as an influencer or celebrity. These brands have been chosen not just for their association with a famous figure, but as examples of narration in the construction of brand identity and image, as will be demonstrated in the cases of KKW beauty, Victoria Beckham, The Attic, S by Serena, Nastygal. Based on the quantitative results of the survey, analysed and linked to statistical correlations, a number of conclusions and managerial implications that can be drawn from the research carried out are shown.

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*The Art of Storytelling*

*“You’re never going to kill storytelling because it’s built into the human plan.*

*We come with it.”*

*- Margaret Atwood<sup>1</sup>*

## 1. What is Storytelling: An Overview

Throughout human history, the act of storytelling has served as an invaluable tool in the transmission of messages and in the sharing of “accumulated knowledge and wisdom to help navigate and explain the world around us.”<sup>2</sup> The telling of stories allows us to express our deepest emotions, to convey our experiences to others, and to forge bond within groups. Notably, storytelling is perhaps one of the oldest, if not the most enduring, forms of human communication.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding obvious changes to the medium, storytelling, as a socially and culturally defined act of imparting information through the model of a tales, stories, and fables, whether they be factual or fictional, has long existed as a means of effectively delivering one’s message to an audience. While storytelling may have evolved beyond images etched into cave walls and tales whispered round open fires, the motivation behind doing so remains the same, timeless and irreplicable.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, it appears to matter little whether the message is conveyed orally or more permanently in the form of print, photography, or film, storytelling is such a powerful tool that it enables us to share our experiences, beliefs, knowledge, insights, and feelings to others outside of the constraints and limitations of time or space.

From birth, we are continually exposed to narratives in the form of stories told to us by those around us.<sup>5</sup> Nearly universally, from earliest childhood, we are told stories from our parents, grandparents, relatives, teachers, and peers, making storytelling an integral part of a child’s social, cultural, moral, and practical education.<sup>6</sup> Inasmuch, storytelling is a fundamental human activity through which we understand the world around us; make sense of our experiences; and shape our group and self-identity.<sup>7</sup> Through the medium of storytelling, we are able to not just share our experiences, but repeat them and relieve them, an action which is inherently enjoyable for the teller. More importantly, however, the telling and retelling of stories enables us see ourselves through the lens of archetypes and to cast ourselves as either the hero or villain, lover, rebel, fool or

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Atwood Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/margaret\\_atwood\\_574317](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/margaret_atwood_574317)

<sup>2</sup> Mancuso J., Stuth K., (2014), Storytelling and Marketing: The Perfect Pairing?, *Marketing Insights*, vol. 26, no. 3, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Butcher K. (2018), Tell me a story: applying storytelling concepts to marketing initiatives, Departmental Honors in the Department of Marketing Texas Christian University Fort Worth, Texas.

<sup>4</sup> Mendoza, M. (2015), The Evolution of Storytelling, *Reporter Magazine*, Reporter Magazine

<sup>5</sup> Van Laer, T., Ruyter, K. D., Vsconti, L. M., & Wetzels, M. (2014), The extended transportation-imagery model: A meta-analysis of the antecedents and consequences of consumers’ narrative transportation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(5), 797-817.

<sup>6</sup> Herskovitz, S., & Crystal, M. (2010). The essential brand persona: Storytelling and branding. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 31(3), 21-28.

<sup>7</sup> Cooper, H., Schembri, S., & Miller, D. (2010). Brand-self identity narratives in the James Bond Movies. *Psychology & Marketing*, 26(6), 557-567.

sage of the narrative, shaping our own sense of self-identity.<sup>8</sup> However, it is not just ourselves that we are convincing of our own narratives when we tell stories, we are also helping shape other's perceptions of identity and the world. Storytelling, especially when the tale is compellingly told, is perhaps one of the most efficacious means by which to persuade others: a desirable tool for any marketer.<sup>9</sup>

As a universal medium through which messages are shared between individuals and groups or organisations, storytelling has allowed humankind to engage with and disseminate culture; establish emotional connections; interpret experiences; and shape the social identity of individuals.<sup>10</sup> Prior to the advent of written language, storytelling played a crucial role in the oral transmission of history and the preservation of culture. As stories were told and retold, narratives became traditions through which experiences could be understood, a facet of storytelling which is revealed in its etymology from the Proto-Indo-European root \**ǵneh<sub>3</sub>*- to know.<sup>11</sup> From its genesis, narrative has played an integral role in our understanding of what it means to know the world and to know ourselves. It was Aristotle who first posited that what distinguishes humanity from non-human animals is our ability to tell stories:<sup>12</sup> *homo sapiens* as *homo narrans*, a creature endowed with the capacity to both know the world and to interpret experiences in the world through narrative representations.<sup>13</sup> Words themselves possess inherent power: they are capable of describing worlds which may never be seen; they may seduce their listeners or repulse them; they can inform and educate; they may enchant; they may also hold transformative powers; but, when used to best effect, they convince their listeners of their speakers rightness. It is for these aforementioned reasons that advertisers and marketers have adopted storytelling as a medium through which to shape brand identity.<sup>14</sup> Storytelling, as both a medium and a tool, can be seen as a *sine qua non* of the human experience.

Indeed, it has been argued that storytelling is such an essential element of the human experience that it is a defining marker of humanity. For any medium which is so ubiquitous there is a clear danger of oversimplification or generalisation, storytelling being no exception. It is useful then to clarify what exactly is meant by "storytelling." A facile explanation would be that storytelling is the telling of stories; however, such an definition fails to reveal the layers of representation and simulation which are essential to the medium.<sup>15</sup> It is for this reason that it has often been noted that storytelling cannot be adequately translated into Italian.<sup>16</sup> Literal translations of the term speak to the ways in which communication is facilitated through stories, and, more

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<sup>8</sup> Woodside, A. G., Sood, S., & Miller, K. (2008). When consumers and brand talk: Storytelling theory and research in psychology and marketing. *Psychology and Marketing*, 25(2), 97-145.

<sup>9</sup> Woodside, AG. (2010), "Brand-Consumer Storytelling Theory and Research: Introduction to a Psychology & Marketing Special Issue." *Psychology & Marketing*, vol. 27, no. 6, pp. 531-540.

<sup>10</sup> Berardi F. (2016), *C'era una volta il brand, la pubblicità nell'era dello Storytelling, l'arte di raccontare la Corporate Identity*, Tesi di laurea Gestione dei processi e delle relazioni; LUISS Guido Carli

<sup>11</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù, M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea.

<sup>12</sup> Lucaites, J. L. and Condit, C. M. (1985), Re-constructing Narrative Theory: A Functional Perspective. *Journal of Communication*, 35: 90-108.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem

<sup>14</sup> Wachtman, E., & Johnson, L. S. (2009). The persuasive power of story. *Marketing Management*, 18(1), 28-34.

<sup>15</sup> Fontana A. (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: la guida definitiva*, Hoepli Editore, Milano.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

specifically, the telling of those stories. Yet, storytelling is first and foremost a means by which representations - be they visual, auditory, or tactile - are used by an individual, or for that matter, a brand, to reach out and engage with an audience, as is noted by Fontana.<sup>17</sup> These representations work in tandem with simulations, imitations of reality that become real themselves.<sup>18</sup> These representations and simulations, in the form of stories, gain their meaning and comprehensibility by adhering to the structure of easily recognisable narrative forms, while respecting the rules and conventions of the various canons of storytelling.<sup>19</sup>

The origins of the modern study of narrative can be traced back to the ancient world, wherein Greek and Roman scholars sought to understand the structure and meaning of narrative genres, a tradition which has continued to modern day in discipline of Narratology, which is the study of narrative structures;<sup>20</sup> but before delving deeper into this definition it is perhaps useful to distinguish the following declinations of storytelling:

*Story*: a series of events retold in a logical and recognisable fashion, typically narrating events as they occurred in chronological succession, which may form the basis of a story.

*Tale*: a fictitious or veracious discourse through which a particular story is told.

*Narration*: an act of enunciation by which a story is conveyed to an audience, be it orally or textually.<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, it must also be considered that each act of narration is composed of two essential elements: a *story*, typically organised as a chronological series of events centred round characters grounded in a particular environment; and, an *act of speech*, in which the contents of the story are communicated through structures of transmission or demonstration to an audience.<sup>22</sup> Put simply, a story is what is represented by a narrative. Aristotle, in his writings on mimesis, created a distinction between *praxis*, an imitation of what is real, and *logos*, an argument. It is these two distinct elements which form the basis of *mythos*, the plot which guides the development of a story.<sup>23</sup> The epistemic purpose of storytelling, therefore, is to enable humankind to elaborate upon and interpret reality, as perceived by the individual storyteller and the larger audience.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>19</sup> Fontana A. (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: la guida definitiva*, Hoepli Editore, Milano, p.23.

<sup>20</sup> Todorov T. (1969) *Grammaire du Décaméron*, The Hague-Paris, Mouton, «Approaches to Semiotics - 3».

<sup>21</sup> Fontana A. (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: la guida definitiva*, Hoepli Editore, Milano.

<sup>22</sup> Wachtman, E., & Johnson, L. S. (2009). The persuasive power of story. *Marketing Management*, 18(1), 28-34.

<sup>23</sup> Chatman S. (1987) *History and discourse. The narrative structure in the novel and in the film*, New Publishing Practices, Parma.

<sup>24</sup> Lucaites, J. L. and Condit, C. M. (1985), *Re-constructing Narrative Theory: A Functional Perspective*. *Journal of Communication*, 35: 90-108.

### 1.1.1. What is History and What are Stories?

“Most people, in fact, will not take the trouble in finding out the truth, but are much more inclined to accept the first story they hear.”

— Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*<sup>25</sup>

The temptation to conflate history with the telling of stories has led to a number of misconceptions as to exactly what storytelling is and is not. Although derived from the same Proto-Indo-European root *\*weyd-*, meaning *to see* - Sanskrit ‘Veda’, Greek ‘εἶδος,’ Latin ‘video’ *et cetera* - the two terms often appear to overlap in significance; however, we can broadly define history as being the study of past, whereas storytelling is best translated and defined as communicating through stories.<sup>26</sup> History then could be said to be the organisation and interpretation of a series of chronological events occurring within a specific time frame and place in the past.<sup>27</sup> While a story is defined by its adherence to a system of perceptual representations - linguistic, iconic, symbolic, and physical signifiers - which communities use as a means of communicating with and understanding the world symbolically beyond the confines of a specific time and place.<sup>28</sup> Stories then shape a *simulacra* of reality that becomes more real with each retelling.

However, this definition too is a simplification of the complexity contained within the act of storytelling. Semiotic theory, compellingly, puts forward the argument that narrative is not just a representation of the world, but a world in its own right. As Gianfranco Marrone has noted, “a text is not a representation of the world for the simple reason that it contains it as its content, and if you think about it, it is part of that world with a social force.”<sup>29</sup> Perhaps then it is better to say that a story is a simulation which creates its own reality. Within the model of simulation as story, there may be real events, which are then represented, simulated, and reported in turn, but these events are always seen through the lens of a particular narrative argument.<sup>30</sup> Whereas History, as a discipline, tends to restrict itself from entering into the world of fiction, emotion, and symbolism, storytelling is steeped in these elements by definition.<sup>31</sup> Storytelling then can be both rooted in real, historical events as well as completely fictional narratives, and, as has been often noted, a story, while being a product of the imagination, is no less effective or consequential than History.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, history devoid of the narrative and the

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<sup>25</sup> Thucydides (1972), *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner. New York: Penguin Press.

<sup>26</sup> Delgado-Ballester, E., Fernández-Sabiote, E. (2016). «Once upon a brand”: Storytelling practices by Spanish brands.» *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, 20. 2, pp. 115-131.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem

<sup>28</sup> Fontana A. (2016), *Storytelling d’impresa: la guida definitiva*, Hoepli Editore, Milano.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem.

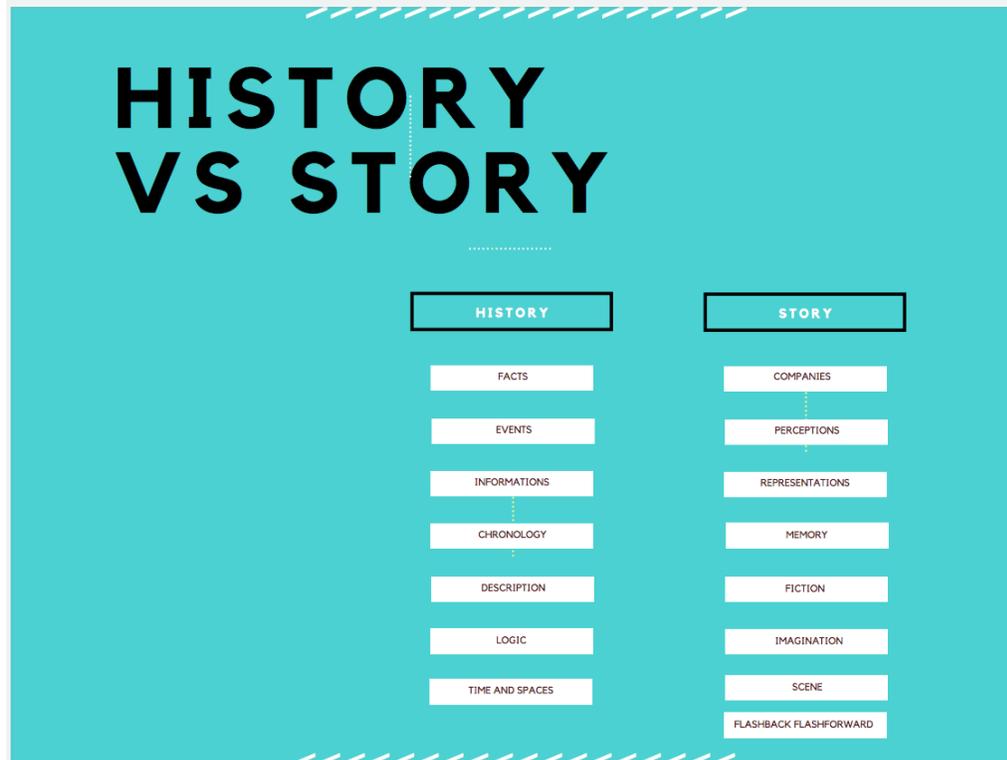
<sup>30</sup> Fona C. (A.A. 2010/2011), *La comunicazione aziendale nell’era dello storytelling: la narratologia comenuovo strumento di management*, tesi discussa alla facoltà di Scienze linguistiche e letterature straniere, Università Cattolica di Milano.

<sup>31</sup> Delgado-Ballester, E., Fernández-Sabiote, E. (2016). «Once upon a brand”: Storytelling practices by Spanish brands.» *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, 20. 2, pp. 115-131.

<sup>32</sup> Fona C. (A.A. 2010/2011), *La comunicazione aziendale nell’era dello storytelling: la narratologia comenuovo strumento di management*, tesi discussa alla facoltà di Scienze linguistiche e letterature straniere, Università Cattolica di Milano.

representative elements of storytelling is right judged as being a dry, restating of facts and figures, lacking in the inherently human impulse to impose narrative form to experience.<sup>33</sup>

**Figure 1. *History vs. Story* as defined by Fontana (2016)**



Separating history from storytelling, two distinct sets of criteria begin to emerge for the respective disciplines. Whereas historians seek to write history through objective description, applying order to facts and figures, interpreted through the lens of historiography;<sup>34</sup> storytellers concern themselves with representations, perceptions, characters, plots, and scenes as seen through layers of cultural, psycho-social, and emotive responses, with interpretation as a guiding force.<sup>35</sup>

However, while there is a clear distinction made between storytelling and history by its practitioners, in everyday life the two modes of organising experience are fused as one. In reality, for the majority of us, “there is no logic without imagination, no existence without meaning, no event without perception, and no fact without enterprise.”<sup>36</sup> It can be argued then that storytelling and History do not stand in opposition to each other, but are

<sup>33</sup> Barthes R. (1969), *L'analisi del racconto*, Bompiani, Milano.

<sup>34</sup> Fontana A. (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: la guida definitiva*, Hoepli Editore, Milano.

<sup>35</sup> Plots, and the psycho-social and emotional references that these involve will become fundamental. Storytellers like introspection and the enigma, fact and given for granted narrators leave them to historians.

<sup>36</sup> Fontana A. (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: la guida definitiva*, Hoepli Editore, Milano.

two complementary elements of a wider reality that are united through narration.<sup>37</sup> Since the Ancient Greeks, and the dual concepts of *kronos* and *mythos*,<sup>38</sup> narrative has brought together history and story, chronology and representation. It is through narration that experiences and events, arranged chronologically, are then interpreted and made sense of through representation.<sup>39</sup>

It should also be noted at this point that just as stories do not have to follow a strictly factual, chronological sequence of events, neither do tellers have to restrict the contents of said stories to the realm of the actual. Stories do not have to be *true* in any verifiable sense, but they do have to tell a *truth*.<sup>40</sup> This distinction, as seen in Fontana, is defined as the difference between a story of truth and a true story.<sup>41</sup> Truth is objective, true is subjective; they exist in spheres very different from one another and should not be bound by the same conventions.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, it is the context in which a story is told that allows the listener to connect to the narrative and find the individual truth within it. A well-told story, firmly grounded in a specific space and time context causes the reader to identify with the protagonist, increasing the effectiveness of the narrative's impact.<sup>43</sup> The context, or setting in which the story is found, is limitless; it could be in a museum or a shop; at a company's headquarters or in the recipient's home.<sup>44</sup> What is crucial, however, is that is the narrative environment fully engages the reader's attention, enriching him or her in some way. Compelling stories are transformative and give the reader an incentive to return time and again, not in small part because of the solutions to life's problems, both practical and existential, which stories impart to their audience.<sup>45</sup>

It is for this reason that while stories do not need to be truthful to tell a truth, a true representation is necessary.<sup>46</sup> For storytellers this entails considering the cultural and social context in which the story is told, including an understanding of the timing and sequencing of events within the narrative, which is effectively achieved through precise story-boarding.<sup>47</sup> While this process can be applied to the oral tradition of storytelling, at present, most stories are crafted long before they reach their audience by experts well-versed in the power of the narrative form.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, more stories in the modern world are processed into the form of objects for consumption - books, magazines, films, websites, social media posts, and all other forms of transmedia - as

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<sup>37</sup> Lucaites, J. L. and Condit, C. M. (1985), Re-constructing Narrative Theory: A Functional Perspective. *Journal of Communication*, 35: 90-108.

<sup>38</sup> YU, K. (2017). From Mythos to Logos; Jean-Pierre Vernant, Max Weber, and The Narrative of Occidental Rationalization. *Modern Intellectual History*, 14(2), 477-506.

<sup>39</sup> Fontana A. (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: la guida definitiva*, Hoepli Editore, Milano.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>43</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>45</sup> Fontana A. (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: la guida definitiva*, Hoepli Editore, Milano.

<sup>46</sup> Libaert T. Johannes K., (2010) *La communication corporate*, Parigi: Dunod.

<sup>47</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea, pp.118-119.

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem.

opposed to the more nebulous and ephemeral stories of the past, which existed primarily in oral form.<sup>49</sup> Through careful consideration of the ways in which stories can communicate truth to their audience, marketers can better communicate with their own audiences and make sense of how to tell stories that convey something true and compelling about a brand, product, or service to consumers.<sup>50</sup>

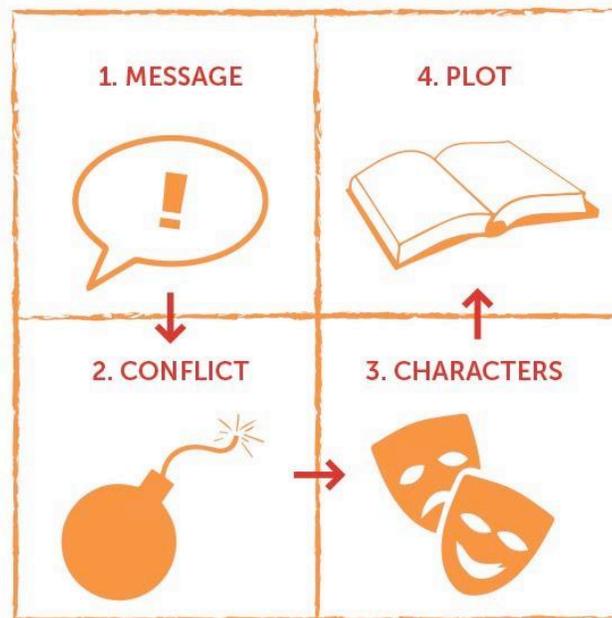
### 1.1.2. The Four Elements of Storytelling

“A story should have a beginning, a middle and an end, but not necessarily in that order.”

- Jean-Luc Godard<sup>51</sup>

Storytelling is understood to have four principle elements which compose its foundations.<sup>52</sup> As defined in the figure below, storytelling is made up of the message; the conflict; the characters; and, the plot.<sup>53</sup> These concepts, as elaborated below, are fundamental to story craft, and, if devoid of any one of these elements, a narrative can not be rightly said to be a story.

**Figure 2. The Four Elements of Storytelling as defined by Giorgino and Mazzù (2018)**



<sup>49</sup> Fontana A. (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: la guida definitiva*, Hoepli Editore, Milano, p.68.

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>51</sup> Gibbons, F. *Jean-Luc Godard: 'Film is over. What to do?'*, *The Guardian*, 12, 07, 2011. Accessed April 27. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/jul/12/jean-luc-godard-film-socialisme>

<sup>52</sup> Fog, K., Budtz, C., Munch, P. & Blanchette, S. (2010). *Branding through Storytelling*. Branding in practice. 2nd edition. Heidelberg: Springer.

<sup>53</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea, pp.118-119.

*The first fundamental of storytelling is that every story must have a clear message at its heart.* Without a clearly defined and easily comprehensible message at its outset, a story cannot take shape logically. The message, or premise, of the story is typically a moral or ideology which represents the underlying, formative theme of the story.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, just as without a message there is no story, if there are multiple messages, the narrator runs of risk of obscuring the moral of the story and confusing the audience.<sup>55</sup>

*A second fundamental aspect of storytelling is conflict as a driving force of narrative.*<sup>56</sup> Without conflict, there is no story: disorder is necessary to advance the plot and to disrupt the equanimity of the situation. Conflict, which is rooted in disruption and fear, stimulates action and propels forward the actors in the plot.<sup>57</sup> It is also what captivates the audience initially and then holds their attention throughout the story.<sup>58</sup> The impulse to apply order to chaos is an essentially human drive, which storytelling makes use of effectively.<sup>59</sup> It should be noted, however, that conflict is morally neutral in the world of storytelling and merely serves as a stage on which the storyteller can communicate his or her perceptions of right and wrong.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, the conflict must be balanced, providing enough disorder to prove interesting, but not so much so that the message becomes lost in the chaos of the plot, nor so much so that there is an over abundance of harmony, depriving the audience of the entertainment it seeks.<sup>61</sup>

*The third fundamental element of storytelling is the characters.*<sup>62</sup> In accordance with the canonical structure of narratives, each character present within the story plays his or her own well-defined role.<sup>63</sup> Typically this equates to the cast being comprised of a hero, an adversary or enemy, and supporting characters who assist in the hero's journey.<sup>64</sup> Conflict experienced by the characters drives plot development and growth, with the hero returning from his quest transformed by the ordeal.<sup>65</sup>

*The fourth and final fundamental of storytelling is plot.*<sup>66</sup> The plot of a narrative can be defined as the sequencing and structuring of events which form the basis of a story. Conventionally, stories are designed to have a clear beginning, middle, and end, with each part serving its own purpose, from the capturing the initial

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<sup>54</sup> Fog, K., Budtz, C., Munch, P. & Blanchette, S. 2010. Branding through Storytelling. Branding in practice. 2nd edition. Heidelberg: Springer.

<sup>55</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea, pp.118-119.

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>58</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>59</sup> Fona C.( A.A. 2010/2011) , La comunicazione aziendale nell'era dello storytelling: la narratologia comenuovo strumento di management, tesi discussa alla facoltà di Scienze linguistiche e letterature straniere, Università Cattolica di Milano.

<sup>60</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea, pp.118-119.

<sup>61</sup> Matthews, R., Wacker, W. 2008. What's Your Story? Storytelling to Move Markets, Audiences, People and Brands. New Jersey: Pearson Education.

<sup>62</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea, pp.118-119.

<sup>63</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>64</sup> Campbell J. (2008), *The Hero with Thousands of Faces* (3rd ed.) Novato, California: Joseph Campbell Foundation

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>66</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea, pp.118-119.

attention of the audience to conflict which advanced the story and ending in some form of resolution.<sup>67</sup> As has been defined by Giorgino and Mazzù, there are five recurring themes which appear in the majority of narratives:

- *The hero's journey or quest*, the hero must rise to the challenge to achieve his or her's aim;
- *Creation or origin stories*, the genesis of a people or a brand;
- *Transformation*, through great suffering the hero is transformed;
- *Fall and redemption*, a fundamental flaw of character leads to the protagonists fall and, with some luck, eventual redemption;
- *The crossroads*, the protagonist is forced to take a decision which is characterised by an extended period of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty regarding the choice.<sup>68</sup>

### 1.1.3 The Three Functions of Storytelling

**"Storytelling offers the opportunity to talk with your audience, not at them."**

**— Laura Holloway<sup>69</sup>**

After identifying the primary elements of which all stories are composed, so too must the functions of storytelling be clarified. The three functions of storytelling can be defined as such, as elaborated by Giorgino and Mazzù:<sup>70</sup>

*The public function of storytelling;*

*The function of storytelling for the individual;*

*The relational function of storytelling.*

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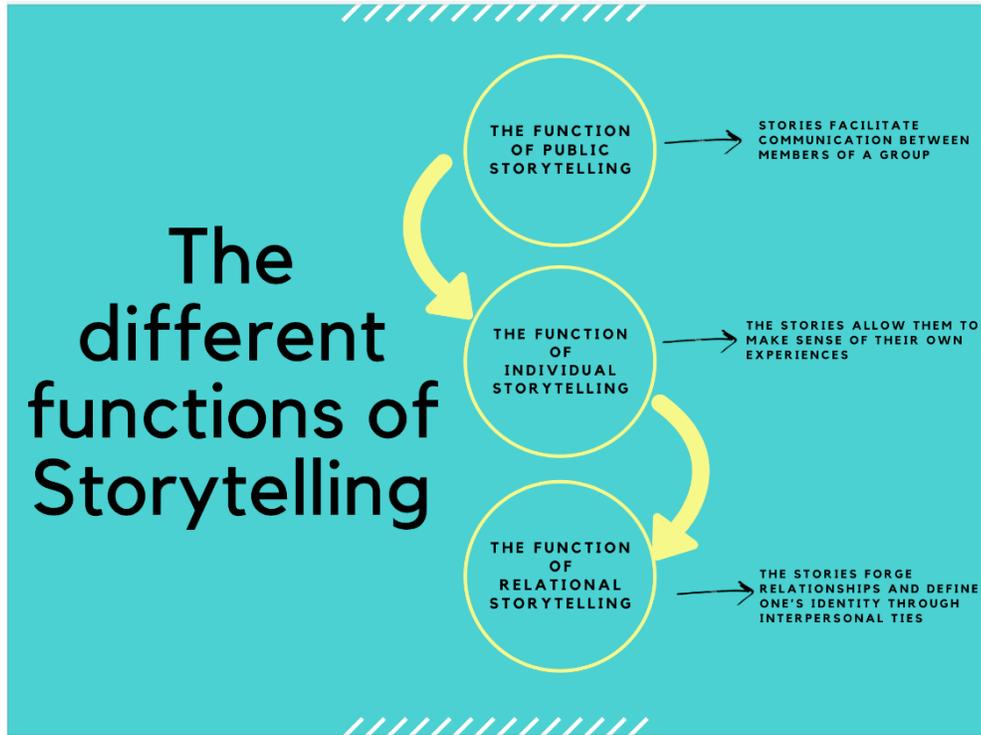
<sup>67</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea.

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>69</sup> Holloway, L. (2019) Accessed 28 April 2019 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/laurabholloway>

<sup>70</sup> Ibidem.

Figure 3. *The Different Functions of Storytelling* - Giorgino and Mazzù (2018)



Turning to the public function of storytelling, stories facilitate communication between members of a group, allowing individuals, institutions, organisations, and, as will be addressed in the proceeding chapter, brands to shape their own public identities.<sup>71</sup> Communicating through stories makes it possible to exist within the public sphere with a clearly defined identity that appears authentic and transparent to others.<sup>72</sup> This is owing to the fact that stories exist within universally recognisable and comprehensible processes. Stories feel authentic to their listeners because the framework of storytelling allows their tellers to present content in a manner which intuitively feels relatable to the audience.<sup>73</sup>

On the other hand, individual narratives serve a much different purpose.<sup>74</sup> Whereas public storytelling allows the teller to relate to and communicate with the group, the stories that individuals tell themselves allow them to make sense of their own experiences.<sup>75</sup> In this regard, the function of autobiography is to shape self-identity and is inherently different from the stories we choose to share publicly. Individual narrative can be said to be self-contained and exist for the individual alone.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea.

<sup>72</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>73</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>74</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>75</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>76</sup> Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli.

Relational storytelling, the third function of narrative, is the realisation of public storytelling.<sup>77</sup> By telling one's own story to others as a means to forge relationships and to define one's identity through interpersonal ties, relational storytelling is an essential part of relationship building, including those relationships that exist between consumers and brands. This form of public storytelling focuses primarily on the ways in which stories allow individuals to relate to others and favours mechanisms such as mutual legitimisation, socialisation, and the exchange of experience.<sup>78</sup>

However, it should be noted that while there are three clearly definable functions of storytelling these functions do not exist in isolation from each other, rather they exist as overlapping layers of individual storytelling.<sup>79</sup> Narratives told by individuals are composed of elements which are simultaneously private, relational, and public, as they must represent all dimensions of the individual.<sup>80</sup> This is due to the need to represent the individual both intrapersonally and interpersonally, while still situated in the public sphere;<sup>81</sup> conversely, narratives told by brands, in the form of corporate storytelling, need only address the public and do not necessitate the same level of introspection. For this reason, corporate storytelling only makes use of the relational and public functions of storytelling, as will be addressed in Chapter 2.2.<sup>82</sup>

#### 1.1.4 The 6 S + 1 of Storytelling

**"Storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it."**

**-Hannah Arendt<sup>83</sup>**

Now that the three functions of storytelling have been identified, we turn to the two principal elements of narration which form the basis of any story: the interconnected cast of subjects, objects, and actions of which a story is composed; and, some form of transformation, which propels the narrative forward.<sup>84</sup> As will be addressed in the proceeding section, scholars of narratology, beginning with Greimas<sup>85</sup> and Propp<sup>86</sup> and arriving at Campbell<sup>87</sup> and Vogler,<sup>88</sup> have proposed various schemes to classify different elements of narration. Building from their work, and focussing on the narrative classification devised by Fontana, we will now examine the 6 S + 1 of storytelling.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea.

<sup>78</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>79</sup> Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli.

<sup>80</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>81</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>82</sup> Salmon C. (2008), *Storytelling. La fabbrica delle storie*, Roma, Fazi.

<sup>83</sup> Arendt, H. "Hannah Arendt (1906-1975)" *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/arendt/a>

<sup>84</sup> Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli.

<sup>85</sup> Greimas A.- Courtes J.,(2007) *Semiotica. Dizionario ragionato della teoria del linguaggio*, Milano: trad.it. Mondadori.

<sup>86</sup> Propp V. ( 2000), *Morfologia della fiaba*, trad.it. Torino: Einaudi.

<sup>87</sup> Campbell J. (2008), *The Hero with thousand of faces* , III edizione Joseph Campbell Foundation, Novato, California.

<sup>88</sup> Vogler C., *Il viaggio dell'eroe*.(2010) *La struttura del mito ad uso di scrittori di narrativa e cinema*, Dino Audino editore, Roma.

<sup>89</sup> Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli.

Figure 4. *The 6S + 1 of Storytelling* – Fontana (2016)



In Fontana’s narrative classification scheme, he defines a number of distinct roles played by various actors in the telling of a story. The first role he identifies is that of the *story-architect*, the author of the story, who is its creator and, perhaps, its teller as well. While the story-architect can be a single individual, just as easily can it be a marketing team, the manager of a company, or any agency tasked with creating content for given purpose.<sup>90</sup> The story-architect may also then be the *gatekeeper*, who as creator of the narrative has the additional responsibility of deciding whether or not to involve an audience in the story. Moreover, due to the complex nature of storytelling, it can often become unclear who it is who is playing these roles.<sup>91</sup> It is then necessary to confront some fundamental questions relating to the accurate identification of the author of any given story, such as: who is the author of the story? Is the author an individual or a brand? Or, a product or service? Where is the story set? Why is the author telling that story and not another? What is the responsibility of the author?<sup>92</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli.

<sup>91</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>92</sup> Ibidem.

An additional consideration is who is the audience, or the *story-listener*.<sup>93</sup> Just as it is vital to identify who is telling the story, it is just as important to define who is the listener to which the story is addressed. While there are those stories which individuals tell to themselves, generally there exists an implication that stories are meant to be told to others. This public and relational nature of storytelling is essential to our understanding of what stories are.<sup>94</sup> Ideally, story-listeners relate to and identify with the story and its author; therefore, it is essential that the teller of the story manages to involve and engage the audience, including the listeners in the narrative by arousing their emotions, stimulating their sympathies, and causing them to cease being passive listeners and begin being active participants in the narrative.<sup>95</sup>

However, achieving this transformation and actively engaging an audience is no simple feat. A thorough knowledge and understanding of the audience is necessary for the story's author: the story-architect must know everything about his or her audience.<sup>96</sup> Balancing the need to engage with an audience and maintain its interest in the narrative, while conveying the importance of the story, is a challenging achievement for any storyteller, as the latter is objective, while the former is entirely subjective and determined by the preferences, experiences, moods, and social-cultural context of the listener.<sup>97</sup>

The third fundamental constant of narrative is the *story* itself.<sup>98</sup> It can be said that all narratives generally adhere to a universal narrative framework that is easily understood and identifiable by both the storyteller and the story's audience. While there are innumerable variations of how stories may be told, and the particulars of theme, plot, and characters they entail, it has been proposed that all stories can be fitted within a canonical narrative scheme.<sup>99</sup> As Fontana describes it,<sup>100</sup> all stories begin at a neutral position, a baseline of normality from which the story then unfolds. After setting the scene, the true story emerges: a conflict is introduced which disrupts the harmony of the initial situation, after which the story progresses through a series of well-calibrated events forcing resolution through transformation and, finally, a return to normality.<sup>101</sup> These steps are outlined in the figure below:

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<sup>93</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>94</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea.

<sup>95</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>96</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>97</sup> Giorgino F., 2017, *Giornalismo e società*, Milano, Mondadori Università

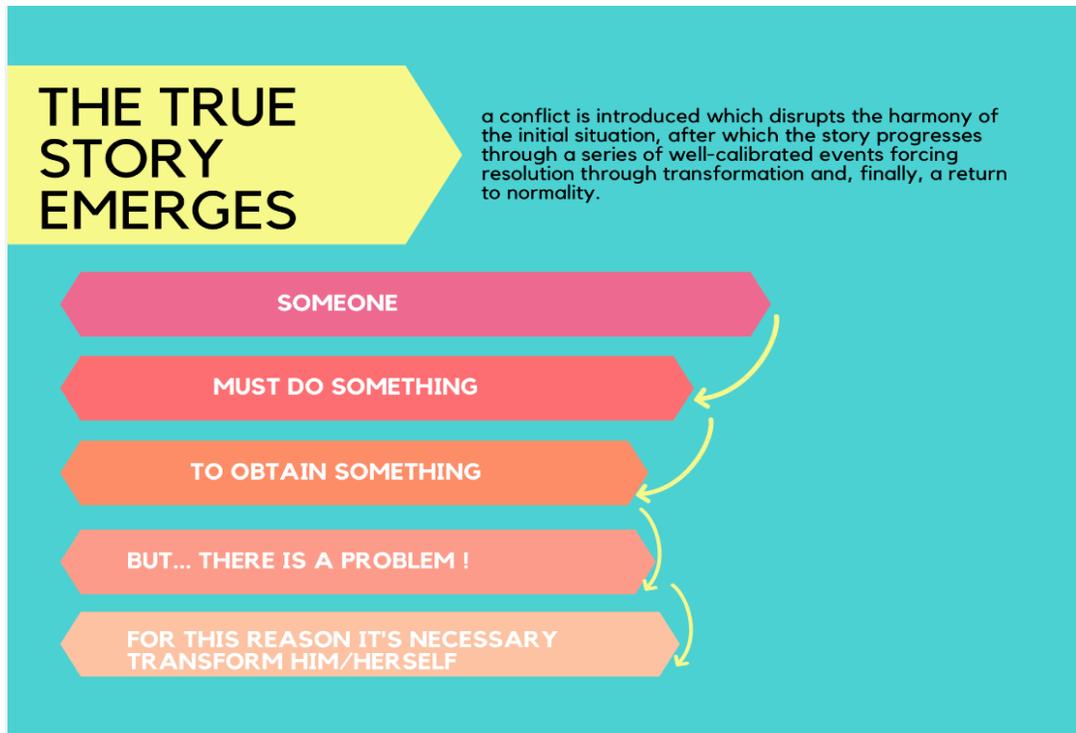
<sup>98</sup> Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli.

<sup>99</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>100</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>101</sup> Ibidem.

Figure 5. *The True Story Emerges* – Fontana (2016)



Another requisite element of storytelling is the means by which a story is disseminated, usually through the role of the *broadcaster* within a communication process channel.<sup>102</sup> In Fontana’s conception of storytelling, an individual, typically possessing specific narrative skills, communicates with an audience through an instrument, a medium such as the media, social media, person-to-person relationships, or print.<sup>103</sup> Naturally, the choice of how best to communicate with one’s audience is also a well-considered action by the story-architect and gatekeeper. The implication for marketers, and all actors involved in corporate storytelling, can be surmised as such: it is not just what you tell, but how you tell it. In essence, one must understand not only how to create content that will interest consumers, but how best to communicate that content.<sup>104</sup>

To fully understand how best to communicate content which will be of interest to consumers, storytelling must also define the *set*, or the space-time context, in which the story occurs.<sup>105</sup> Placing the story within a particular temporal setting allows the reader to identify with the protagonist and connect the narrative to his or her own reality.<sup>106</sup> In this sense, the setting can be understood to be the environment of the narrative,

<sup>102</sup>Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli.

<sup>103</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>104</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>105</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>106</sup> Ibidem.

which serves to enrich the reader's appreciation of the story and provide an incentive by which to compel the him or her to return to the story, creating an actual and virtual echo recognition system.<sup>107</sup>

The sixth, and final, constant of storytelling is that of the figure of the *story-holder*, which can be defined as a process by which the otherwise passive story-listener becomes engaged in the narrative to an extent by which he or she is rendered an active participant.<sup>108</sup> This transformation is most frequently seen on social media, where the level of audience engagement is significantly higher than other more traditional channels of communication.<sup>109</sup>

### 1.1.5 Thinking Critically About Storytelling: Narratology

**“So, you may ask, what is the use of studying the world of imagination where anything is possible and anything can be assumed, where there are no rights or wrongs and all arguments are equally good?”**

**- Northrop Frye<sup>110</sup>**

As elaborated above, storytelling is an essentially human act which has developed and evolved over time, while remaining a constant of the human experience. Storytelling may have its roots in a time primordial; however, the history of narratology, or the science of studying narratives, stretches back to the Ancient world, where storytelling was probed by such thinkers as Aristotle amongst others.<sup>111</sup>

This tradition was then revived in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the discipline of narratology, which examines the structure and function of narratives and their themes, conventions, and symbols.<sup>112</sup> From within the vast sea of literary criticism, there exist a select few currents of thought which distinguish themselves as exemplars:<sup>113</sup> the work of Vladimir Propp, within the stream of Russian Formalism; French Structuralism, and the studies undertaken by the French School and Greimas; Chatman's contribution to neo-American literary criticism; Joseph Campbell's analysis of archetypes and the narrative form; the distinctly Italian approach to semiotics presented by Umberto Eco; Bruner's work on cognitive psychology; the study of narratives in cinema as exemplified by Vogler; and, finally, Christopher Booker's recent analysis of narrative form.<sup>114</sup> These scholars, and their work, form the basis of contemporary thinking about narratives and have become canonical in their own right; however, for the purposes of this thesis, we will turn out attention to Propp, Volger, and Campbell, with subsequent analysis of the effects of storytelling on advertising, as informed by the studies of Booker.

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<sup>107</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>108</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>109</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>110</sup> Frye, N. (1964), *The Educated Imagination*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.

<sup>111</sup> Lucaites, J. L. and Condit, C. M. (1985), Re-constructing Narrative Theory: A Functional Perspective. *Journal of Communication*, 35: 90-108.

<sup>112</sup> Definition of Narratology, The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, Literary Theory, <https://www.britannica.com/art/narratology>

<sup>113</sup> Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli, p.23.

<sup>114</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea.

As the French semiotician, Roland Barthes, once wrote,

*narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the history of people without narratives. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives...Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, trans historical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself.*<sup>115</sup>

Narrative is life itself; it is an inextricable part of the human experience, and, inasmuch, is a powerful tool to be exploited, as will be addressed in Chapter 1.2. To best understand how narrative may be employed by individual storytellers and corporate storytellers alike, it is then expedient to turn to the insights gleaned from narratology.

### 1.1.5 Vladimir Propp: A Morphology of Storytelling

**“The number of functions known to a fairy tale is limited.”**

- Vladimir Propp<sup>116</sup>

Vladimir Propp, the Russian folklorist, is perhaps best known for his analysis of narrative form, as presented in Russian fairy tales, in works such as the seminal, *Morphology of the Folk Tale*.<sup>117</sup> Propp argued that based on his close reading of over 100 traditional fairy tales, or “wonder stories,” there are 31 fundamental functions which occur sequentially in stories.<sup>118</sup> His structural analysis of fairy tales formed the basis for the creation of a pragmatic model by which to understand and chart the development of narratives.<sup>119</sup> These 31 steps, in Propp’s model are fixed and consecutive, beginning from *Absentation* and ending in *Wedding*.<sup>120</sup>

To summarise Propp’s syntagmatic analysis,<sup>121</sup> the course they chart is as follows: the world in which our characters find themselves initially is characterised by well-being and a lack of conflict, a stasis which is their ordinary world. This initial phase is followed by a crisis of some kind, whether it be a conflict, disaster, and mere ill-fate, the protagonist is then forced from the ordinary world to the extraordinary one.<sup>122</sup> Subsequently, the protagonist may be warned against certain dangers that could befall him and he makes forays into the extraordinary world.<sup>123</sup> It is then that the antagonist enters the narrative, attempting to trick, trap, or otherwise impede the journey of the protagonist. It is only then that the protagonist, often aided by mysterious

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<sup>115</sup> Barthes R. (1969), *Analysis of the story*, Bompiani, Milan.

<sup>116</sup> Shmoop Editorial Team. (2008, November 11). Vladimir Propp Quotes. Retrieved May 25, 2019, from <https://www.shmoop.com/structuralism/vladimir-propp-quotes.html>

<sup>117</sup> Propp V. (2000), *Morfologia della fiaba*, trad.it. Torino: Einaudi.

<sup>118</sup> Bruner J.(2006), *la fabbrica delle storie: Diritto, letteratura*, Roma-Bari: vita trad.it. Laterza

<sup>119</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>120</sup> Propp V. (1968), *Morphology of the Folktale*, University of Texas Press, Austin and London.

<sup>121</sup> Volli U.(2007), *Manuale di semiotica* Bari-Roma: Laterza

<sup>122</sup> Propp V. (1968), *Morphology of the Folktale*, University of Texas Press, Austin and London.

<sup>123</sup> Ibidem.

figures, is able to understand the traps which have been laid along his way.<sup>124</sup> This inevitably leads to confrontation and struggle between the protagonist and the antagonist, with the hero, after much hardship and suffering, emerging forged by his experiences.<sup>125</sup> Within Propp's structuralist model, it is only after confrontation that the hero is transfigured, allowing him to return back to the ordinary world, ideally returning to marry as a reward for his sacrifice and valour.<sup>126</sup> The actors within this model are grouped into seven abstract character functions that propel the narrative forward through the 31 progressive stages of the narrative.<sup>127</sup> While it should be noted that Propp's work has been roundly criticised, by scholars such as the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss,<sup>128</sup> as being excessively formal and too fixed to a model of narrative progression,<sup>129</sup> his work should not be dismissed for its relevant insights into narrative structure, form, theme, and character development.

Propp's canonical narrative scheme sought to organise and place guidelines on narrative to chart its progression.<sup>130</sup> The scheme also attempted to analysis the ways in which the self, be it of an individual, institution, or organisation, is constructed.<sup>131</sup> In doing so, the scheme is also a tool by which to define oneself and make sense of one's place in the world, a sort of "metanarrative," by which the self is created.<sup>132</sup> Through these models personal, institutional, and organisational identity, one is better able to understand oneself and through storytelling, where one's own story, which is told and retold endlessly, takes shape.<sup>133</sup> It can then be said that canonical narrative schemes, like the one developed by Propp, are a set of "schematic representations...of a semi-narrative that the members of a certain culture have elaborated on the basis of repeated experiences."<sup>134</sup>

An example of the practical applications of Propp's narrative scheme for marketers and advertisers can be found in the advert created for the internationally recognised Zippo brand of lighters. The story told in the advert is structured round a story told by a grandfather to his grandson of how, during the war of his youth, he found himself under enemy fire and hit by a bullet in the chest, falling to the ground, seeming marked for death. The story continues when the grandson, who had closed his eyes to listen in rapt silence to his grandfather's epic tale, opens his eyes to see his grandfather, alive, touching his chest, from which he draws a Zippo lighter

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<sup>124</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>125</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>126</sup> Everard J. (2007), Jerry Everard's Introduction to Vladimir Propp, [http://lostbiro.com/blog/?page\\_id=522](http://lostbiro.com/blog/?page_id=522)

<sup>127</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>128</sup> Lévi-Strauss C. (1960), «L'analyse morphologique des contes russes», *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics*, 3: 122-149.

<sup>129</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss who, instead of increasing the abstract character of the Propp's model, prophesies, as does Greimas, to criticize it on the contrary as too "formalistic". The anthropologist's proposal is therefore to take into account also the surface figures of fairy tales (specific actions, characters, concrete details) since they would not be irrelevant at all. This conviction derives from the analysis of myths that have uncertain relationship with fairy tales but which surely possess, in common with these latter, a deep narrative structure. Now, in the analysis of myth, the plane of surface figures is very important in order to hypothesize about the most abstract and profound levels. For example, in the Bororo myths and in particular as regards their alimentary dimension, it is not at all arbitrary that some animals appear instead of others. Lévi-Strauss C. (1960), «L'analyse morphologique des contes russes», *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics*, 3: 122-149.

<sup>130</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea.

<sup>131</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>132</sup> Bruner J. (2006), *the factory of stories: Law, Literature*, Rome-Bari: life trad.it. Laterza

<sup>133</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea.

<sup>134</sup> Volli U. (2007), *Bari-Rome Semiotics Manual*: Laterza

from his jacket pocket. The image of the dented object, deformed by the bullet which saved the young soldier's life, in his hands, and subsequently in the hands of the grandfather who then entrusts this totem of family lore to his grandson. In a moving final image, the young man puts it in his shirt pocket just above the heart, completing the sequence of narrative events in a typically defined plot. From extraordinary to ordinary, from challenge to triumphant return, the narrative tools employed in Zipp's marketing campaign are emblematic of the narrative model devised by Propp.<sup>135</sup>

**Figure 6. Zippo: Heirloom, marketing campaign (2019)**



**Propp's Canonical Narrative Scheme**

<b>Preparation</b>	A community or family in their normal state of being;
<b>Complication</b>	The villain harms a member of the hero's family; The hero plans action against the villain;
<b>Transference</b>	The hero is given a magical gift; The hero arrives at the place where he can fulfill his quest;
<b>Struggle</b>	There is a struggle between the hero and the villain;
<b>Return</b>	The hero escapes; A task is set for the hero; The hero accomplishes the task;
<b>Recognition</b>	The hero is rewarded.

<sup>135</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOOgg7jWxPw>

### 1.1.6 Campbell and the Hero's Journey: Storytelling, Myth, and Identity

“Myths are public dreams, dreams are private myths.”

- Joseph Campbell<sup>136</sup>

In historian and essayist Joseph Campbell a continuation of the work begun by Propp can be seen, with Campbell turning his gaze to journey of the hero as the driving force behind his analysis. From the epics of Homer to storytelling's more modern iterations, it is possible to distinguish the character of the hero, who is tasked with the challenge of overcoming seemingly insurmountable feats in order to accomplish his journey. Campbell's formative work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*,<sup>137</sup> established his theory that within countless myths, originating from all corners of the globe, the same narratological structure is present, what he termed, *monomyth*.<sup>138</sup> Campbell's definition of monomyth states that, while the particulars may be different, legends are universally, immutably composed of the same series of events and episodes, as told in unvarying succession, throughout the world. Summarily put, Campbell argued that all heroic myths, despite their superficial differences and innumerable variations, are essentially a retelling of a singular foundational monomyth. In his view, myths serve as “very precise models of the mechanisms of the human mind, true psychologically valid and emotionally realistic maps of the psyche, even when they represent fantastic, impossible or unreal events.”<sup>139</sup>

Through tracing the manifold permutations of stories, both as told by the individual and collectively, Campbell posited that the existential questions which face humanity can be answered, addressing such themes as morality, existence, and origin.<sup>140</sup> The hero's journey, which can be defined as the basis for all stories, whether they be ancient myths, biographies, fairy tales, or even advertisement as will later be discussed, forms the basic structure of all narratives.<sup>141</sup> Campbell theorised that underneath the world of phenomena there lay an eternal source of time, suffering, and death, and it was the hero's quest to peel back this layer of phenomena and reveal what existed before and beyond words.<sup>142</sup> Through tremendous suffering and personal sacrifice, the hero could access this eternal source, free to return with the truths the source had imparted, a transcendent gift potent enough to liberate humanity.<sup>143</sup> Thus, Campbell's model of the hero's journey can be seen as a *vade mecum* to understanding, interpreting, and harnessing the power of narrative, by both storytellers and marketers. As has been noted, “the hero's journey is the recognition of an excellent model, a set of principles that govern the way

<sup>136</sup> Joseph Campbell Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 25, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/joseph\\_campbell\\_129831](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/joseph_campbell_129831)

<sup>137</sup> Campbell J. (2008), *The Hero with Thousands of Faces* (3rd ed.) Novato, California: Joseph Campbell Foundation

<sup>138</sup> Bruner J. (2006), *la fabbrica delle storie: Diritto, letteratura, Roma-Bari: vita trad.it. Laterza*

<sup>139</sup> Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli, p.23.

<sup>140</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea.

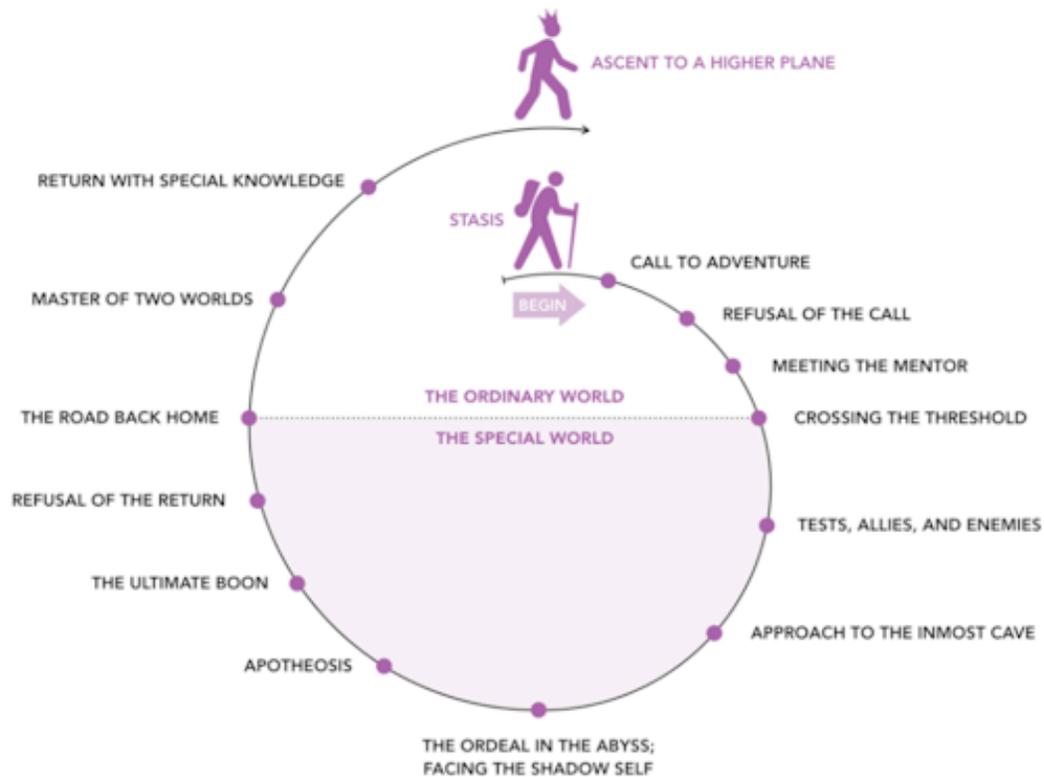
<sup>141</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>142</sup> Vogler C., (2010) *Il viaggio dell'eroe. The structure of the myth for use by fiction writers and cinemas*, Dino Audino editore, Rome.

<sup>143</sup> Campbell J. (2008), *The Hero with thousand of faces* (3th ed.) Novato, California :Joseph Campbell Foundation.

we live and the world of the narrative.”<sup>144</sup> As the hero journeys within the narrative,<sup>145</sup> so too does the storyteller and his audience, echoing the ways in which we seek to transform the world from "transparent to transcendence.”<sup>146</sup>

**Figure 7. Campbell's *The Hero's Journey* - TheAretical.com<sup>147</sup>**



Summarising Campbell's studies, we can identify and establish a number of distinct, universally traceable components to a hero's journey, as elaborated by Christopher Vogler.<sup>148</sup> The defining feature of the hero's journey is transformation, with visible change in behaviour at each of the twelve steps along the way.

<sup>144</sup> Vogler C., (2010) *Il viaggio dell'eroe. The structure of the myth for use by fiction writers and cinemas*, Dino Audino editore, Rome.

<sup>145</sup> Eco U. (1994), "Six walks in narrative woods", Harvard University Press, Boston.

<sup>146</sup> Barthes R. [et al.] *L'analisi del racconto* (1969), Milano: (Trad.: L. Del Grosso Destrieri e P. Fabbri) Bompiani

<sup>147</sup> TheAretical (2019), *The Hero's Journey in Advertising*, last seen 28 may 2019, <http://www.thearetical.com/blog/the-heros-journey-in-advertising>

<sup>148</sup> Vogler C., (2010) *Il viaggio dell'eroe. The structure of the myth for use by fiction writers and cinemas*, Dino Audino editore, Rome, p. 27.

These steps resemble the canonical scheme devised by Propp and can be summarised as follows:

<b>Ordinary World</b>	At the beginning of each story, the protagonist is situated within an ordinary, recognisable world
<b>Call to Adventure</b>	The hero is called to adventure, establishing the tasks which must be undertaken and accomplished
<b>Refuse the Call</b>	A period of resistance to the call to adventure and to change more generally
<b>The Mentor</b>	The hero encounters a mentor, usually in the form of a wizened sage, who offers encouragement, wisdom, and the magical tools necessary for the hero to accomplish his or her objective
<b>Cross the First Threshold</b>	The point of no return at which the hero enters the Special World and can no longer return to the Ordinary World
<b>Tests, Allies, and Enemies</b>	After crossing the first threshold, the hero then encounters allies and enemies within the extraordinary world, who then aid or impede his or her ability to face tests
<b>Approach the Inmost Cave</b>	The hero crosses the second threshold, arriving at the place he or she had sought on the quest
<b>Ordeal</b>	A feat of endurance, the hero must face the most dangerous point of his or her journey
<b>Reward</b>	The hero takes possession of a treasure as a reward for successfully navigating the ordeal
<b>The Road Back</b>	The hero returns home to the Ordinary World
<b>Resurrection</b>	The hero crosses the third threshold which brings about a confrontation with the enemy, experiences resurrection, and is transformed by the experience
<b>Return with the Elixir</b>	The triumphant hero returns from his or her journey, bringing with him or her an elixir, some form of treasure or valuable lesson, which is then shared with the Ordinary World <sup>149</sup>

Like Propp's canonical narrative scheme, the hero's journey serves as the basis of any story - a narratological insight which can be used as the foundation of a brand's story, as will be further discussed in Chapter 1.2; however, unlike Propp's scheme, it has been postulated by scholars such as Vogler, that Campbell's model is, in fact, a flexible structure.<sup>150</sup> It is not necessary then to follow each step in strict succession, but to consider the 12 phases as a guide for individual and collective transformation.

Additionally, Campbell defined seven principle archetypes, which represent the characters present in a story, and are fundamental to understanding his narratological theories.<sup>151</sup> The seven narrative archetypes, as

<sup>149</sup> Interpretations of Joseph Campbell and the Hero's Journey: [https://msu.edu/~jdowell/pdf/Joseph\\_Campbell\\_PathHero.pdf](https://msu.edu/~jdowell/pdf/Joseph_Campbell_PathHero.pdf)

<sup>150</sup> Vogler C., (2010) *Il viaggio dell'eroe. The structure of the myth for use by fiction writers and cinemas*, Dino Audino editore, Rome, p. 27.

<sup>151</sup> Fona C. (A.A. 2010/2011), *La comunicazione aziendale nell'era dello storytelling: la narratologia come nuovo strumento di management*, tesi discussa alla facoltà di Scienze linguistiche e letterature straniere, Università Cattolica di Milano, pp.124-125.

established by Campbell, owe much of their lineage to the pioneering research by Carl Jung, one of the founders analytical psychology, who maintained that “there is a collective unconscious, similar to the individual one. Fairy tales and myths are equivalent to the dreams of an entire culture and spring from the collective unconscious.”<sup>152</sup> In his conception of archetypes, they serve an instrumental function as a means by which to understand the universal, archaic patterns and images stemming from the collective unconscious, which are present in all human cultures.<sup>153</sup> In narratology, and in Campbell’s interpretation of archetypes more specifically, they serve to elucidate the role of any given character within a larger story.<sup>154</sup>

However, as with the canonical narrative structure established by Propp, the archetypes which the characters are defined by are not pre-existing and established roles in the Ordinary World, but temporary functions which the characters perform in order to realise their role in the journey.<sup>155</sup> These approaches to understanding narrative highlight the necessity for functionality in the theme, characters, and plot that compose the basis of a story; and, incidentally, form the basis round which brands build their own stories, as will be addressed in the proceeding section. Campbell’s seven archetypes, which are distinguished by their psychological and narrative and/or dramaturgical function in a story, are as follows:

<b>The Hero</b>	The protagonist of the story, whose purpose is to hear the call to adventure, leaving the ordinary world to face great suffering, in the hopes of completing the quest and returning to ordinary world to restore balance. We identify with the hero and see the world from his or her perspective
<b>The Mentor</b>	A supportive figure who provides the hero with the encouragement, wisdom, and training necessary to complete the hero’s quest
<b>Threshold Guardian</b>	These guardians are tasked with protecting the special world - and its treasures - from outsiders. They test the hero’s commitment and worthiness
<b>Herald</b>	Characters who announce the arrival of meaningful change in the story and issue challenges to the hero
<b>The Shapeshifter</b>	A masked character, who conceals his or her intentions and loyalties, while attempting to mislead the hero
<b>The Shadow</b>	Representative of our darkest, hidden desires, abilities, and qualities. This character can also represent our greatest fears. The shadow mask is often worn by the hero’s enemies
<b>Trickster</b>	A force of instability, tricksters revel in disturbing the <i>status quo</i> and causing chaos in the ordinary world. They employ humour to ridicule the world around them and force the other characters to acknowledge the absurdity of the situation <sup>156</sup>

<sup>152</sup> Vogler C., (2010) *Il viaggio dell'eroe. The structure of the myth for use by fiction writers and cinemas*, Dino Audino editore, Rome, p. 27.

<sup>153</sup> Feist J, Feist GJ, (2009) *Theories of Personality*, New York New York; McGraw-Hill.

<sup>154</sup> Vogler C., (2010) *Il viaggio dell'eroe. The structure of the myth for use by fiction writers and cinemas*, Dino Audino editore, Rome, p. 27.

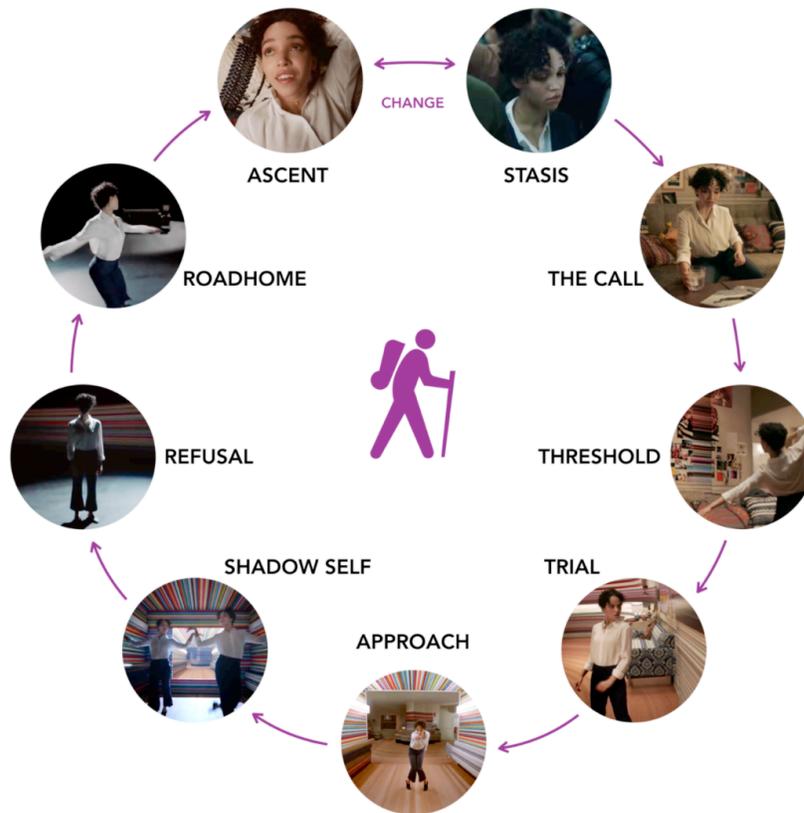
<sup>155</sup> Interpretations of Joseph Campbell and the Hero’s Journey: [https://msu.edu/~jdowell/pdf/Joseph\\_Campbell\\_PathHero.pdf](https://msu.edu/~jdowell/pdf/Joseph_Campbell_PathHero.pdf)

<sup>156</sup> Fona C. (A.A. 2010/2011), *La comunicazione aziendale nell’era dello storytelling: la narratologia comenuovo strumento di management*, tesi discussa alla facoltà di Scienze linguistiche e letterature straniere, Università Cattolica di Milano, pp.124-125.

These concepts, of narrative progression and archetypes, while not explicitly conceptualised for marketers, nevertheless contain valuable insights into the ways in which brands can exploit narrative structures to better communicate with their audience. Storytelling, as will be further elaborated upon in section 1.2, allows brands to harness the universally recognisable structure of narratives to tell their own stories, shape brand identity, and connect to consumers on an emotional level.<sup>157</sup> To captivate an audience, whether it be children listening to a bedtime story or consumers to which a product is to be sold, it is essential to understand the role of storytelling in doing so.

An example of the practical application of Campbell’s narrative scheme for marketers can be found in the recent “Welcome Home” advert for Apple’s HomePod Home, directed by the legendary Spike Jonze.<sup>158</sup>

**Figure 8. The Hero’s Journey in Apple’s “Welcome Home” Marketing Campaign - (2018)**



<sup>157</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea.

<sup>158</sup> HomePod™, "Welcome Home," directed by Spike Jonze, last seen 28 May 2019 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=209&v=BLAnTQfFXOI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=209&v=BLAnTQfFXOI)

1. The story begins with our hero, who lives a prosaic life in an anonymous city, hemmed in on all sides her humdrum existence
2. When our protagonist turns on her HomePod, her environment begins to expand, signalling her call to adventure. There moment where she appears to question whether or not she should engage with this extraordinary force
3. Once she heeds the call to adventure, the walls are gradually coaxed open, after which the hero of the advert crosses the threshold into an extraordinary, beautifully vibrant world
4. There is a moment of doubt, in which the protagonist questions whether she really wants to continue her journey or return to the relative safety of the ordinary world
5. She then enters a cave of color and light, moving deeper into the terrain of the extraordinary world
6. She then encounters a literal reflection of herself, with whom she dances
7. She is called home to the ordinary world
8. She looks back at the world she's leaving behind, as if contemplating what she's learned and what she can now impart on the ordinary world
9. Our hero travels back to the ordinary world
10. She returns to exactly where she started, on the couch in her once again ordinary apartment, visibly transformed into someone happier and more full of life

After her adventure, our hero returns transformed by the knowledge that a high-quality device makes a space feel bigger and more vibrant, rendering the message of the campaign clear: *Buy Apple HomePod, and you too can feel this apotheosis.*

### 1.1.7 Christopher Vogler: A Practical Application of Campbell's Theories

**“A myth... is a metaphor for a mystery beyond human comprehension. It is a comparison that helps us understand, by analogy, some aspect of our mysterious selves. A myth, in this way of thinking, is not an untruth but a way of reaching a profound truth.”**

**— Christopher Vogler<sup>159</sup>**

In his interpretation of Campbell's theory of narrative archetypes, *The Writer's Journey*, the American cinematographer and screenwriter Christopher Vogler has argued that Campbell's archetypes, far from being rigidly defined, are infinitely flexible and varied.<sup>160</sup> In his reading of Campbell, he posits that archetypes, fundamentally, are expressions of the society from which they have arisen, and, while certain themes are

<sup>159</sup> Vogler, C. (1998) *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*. Los Angeles: Michael Weise Productions.

<sup>160</sup> Vogler C., *Il viaggio dell'eroe*.(2010) La struttura del mito ad uso di scrittori di narrativa e cinema, Dino Audino editore, Roma, p.27.

universal, they are coloured by the historical context from which they sprung.<sup>161</sup> In Vogler’s view, stories are inherently shaped by the context in which they are told: history dictates their structure; convictions dictate their characters and plots; and, the storyteller dictates the theme, tone, and mood.<sup>162</sup> Accordingly, storytellers must then define context as well as content, motive, and objective, before then identifying who it is they want to tell. Perhaps most importantly, Vogler emphasises the need to define one’s audience, or target audience, as of primary importance for storytellers.<sup>163</sup>

In the context of marketing, the use of archetypes in storytelling gains importance as a means by which to effectively reach a target audience, therefore, marketers must first understand what it is that will best reach the hearts and mind of consumers.<sup>164</sup> It is then imperative for marketers to carefully identify not just consumer’s needs, but also their values and beliefs, their habits and preferences, and the language with which best to reach them: in essence, marketers need to understand what stories their audience want to hear.<sup>165</sup> Through the lens of Vogler’s interpretation, Campbell’s archetypes can be surmised as being such for marketers:

<b>The Hero</b>	The individual consumer, who is on a quest to find a treasure, in this case the product or service
<b>The Mentor</b>	A trusted person, possibly a celebrity or influencer, who offers expert advice and opinions on a product or service
<b>The Threshold Guardian</b>	Threshold experiences in life, such as ceremonies or other major life events, where the consumer must make choices about how to act
<b>The Messenger</b>	Someone, perhaps a friend or acquaintance, who encourages the consumer to make changes
<b>The Shapeshifter</b>	A force which causes the consumer to doubt product choices, this could be an offer from a competitor or the negative judgement of a mentor in respect to a particular brand
<b>The Shadow</b>	Doubts, fears, and questioning about purchasing a brand’s products or services
<b>The Trickster</b>	The consumer’s desire to change <sup>166</sup>

By identifying these figures in the consumer’s narrative of product purchasing and brand engagement, marketers are better able to construct stories which appeal to the consumer on an individual level, making him the protagonist and hero of his own journey.

<sup>161</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>162</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>163</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea.

<sup>164</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea.

<sup>165</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>166</sup> Nudd T. G., Schwart R., Royer T., Hepinstall K. (2012), “7 Basic Types of Stories: Which One Is Your Brand Telling?”, Adweek. <http://www.ninjamarketing.it/2012/11/19/raccontare-il-brand-attarverso-sette-modelli-narrativi/>

An example of Vogler's narrative scheme in regards to marketing emerges from Lotto New Zealand's 2018 marketing campaign; although, it should be noted, that in this particular example, not all of the stages of the hero's journey are shown, but rather are merely implied.<sup>167</sup>The advert begins with a story already in progress, where the protagonist, a young boy, doughy boy named Dylan, who we can infer is subpar peewee athlete.<sup>168</sup> The ball that rolls in the opening shots to Dylan is representative of his call to adventure, and the kick is his way of crossing the mythical threshold that separates the bold from the timid. He avoids enemies, has a moment of reflection where he confronts his own limitations, and eventually succeeds in his ordeal to pass the ball. The apotheosis, in which the young hero of the advertisement feels "the tectonic plates of his life shifting" as he ascends to a new realm of greatness communicates a single, simple message to audiences: if you win the lottery, you will feel like a kid who's just kicked the game-winning ball. This message, told in the form of an easily understood story, which is relatable above all else, is emblematic of the use of narrative in a marketing context.

**Figure 9. New Zealand Lotto "Dylan" Marketing Campaign - (2018)**

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<sup>167</sup> The Aretical (2019), The Hero's Journey in Advertising, last seen 28 may 2019, <http://www.thearetical.com/blog/the-heros-journey-in-advertising>

<sup>168</sup> Dylan Lotto New Zealand Ad, (2018), Last Seen 28 may 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=60&v=fegb2SqFCBA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=60&v=fegb2SqFCBA)

<sup>169</sup> Dylan Lotto New Zealand Ad, (2018), Last Seen 28 may 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=60&v=fegb2SqFCBA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=60&v=fegb2SqFCBA)

### 1.1.8 Christopher Booker

“We are in fact uncovering nothing less than a kind of hidden, universal language: a nucleus of situations and figures which are the very stuff from which stories are made.”

- Christopher Booker<sup>170</sup>

Continuing in the vein of Propp, Campbell, and Vogler, the British journalist and author, has identified seven basic plot structures to which narratives adhere. Just as there are significant insights which can be gleaned from the narratological analysis of his predecessors for marketers, so too does Booker’s work provide value tools for corporate storytellers.<sup>171</sup> Summarised below are the seven essential plots which he has identified:

<b>Overcoming the Monster</b>	The hero is charged with defeating an evil force
<b>Rags to Riches</b>	The protagonist rises from poverty to great wealth in an arduous journey
<b>The Quest</b>	The protagonist endures a long journey, replete with dangers and trials to test his or her mettle, in search of a treasure
<b>Voyage and Return</b>	The protagonist finds himself in a strange land and must make the long journey to return to his or her place of origin
<b>Comedy</b>	The protagonist, who is light and cheerful, must overcome conflict to arrive at a happy ending, or resolution
<b>Tragedy</b>	A character flaw or ill-fate leads the protagonist to an unfortunate end, either due to punishment or death
<b>Rebirth</b>	An event, or series of events, forces the protagonist to amend his or her behaviour and becomes a better person in the end

By tapping into Booker’s insights on plot structure and typology, marketers can better craft stories that feel organic and authentic to consumers, while at the same time being easily comprehensible to them.<sup>172</sup> Just as Vogler’s insights into Campbell’s archetypes can be employed to good effect to help consumers identify with a brand’s story, so too can plot be used to encourage consumers to see themselves as engaged in the narrative, with themselves as the protagonists.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>170</sup> Booker C.,(2006),The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories, Bloomsbury Academic

<sup>171</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>172</sup>Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea.

<sup>173</sup> Ibidem.

In addition, Booker contends that while all narratives fall within his scheme of categorisation, there are a select few archetypal structures which are of particular use to marketers and advertisers, as are highlighted below:

*Overcoming the monster:* The classic David versus Goliath narrative structure is often used by firms seeking to outshine a bigger, more powerful competitor. One such example is Apple's classic 1984 advert, which introduced the Macintosh PC to consumers while directly attacking its larger competitor, IBM, as illustrated in the figure below:

**Figure 10. Apple Macintosh - (1984)**



*Rags to riches:* A particularly popular narrative theme for the American market, rags to riches stories are exceptionally useful for myth building around brand founders, such as has been seen in the case of Howard Shultz, Oprah, or Richard Branson. These types of stories are especially effective when the protagonist faces numerous setbacks to return victorious.

*The quest:* Storylines which follow the quest model take audiences on a journey where there is a clearly defined goal, such as the founding of a business. This is in line with the movement towards greater transparency, especially in startups.

*Rebirth*: During the course of the story, events transpire to force change in the protagonist, rendering him or her a better person and greater leader. This is seen in the myth building surrounding figures like Steve Jobs, who was fired from Apple and later returned triumphantly, or Elon Musk, who was fired from PayPal and went on to found Tesla and Space X.

## 1.2 Corporate Storytelling

**“Stories constitute the single most powerful weapon in a leader’s arsenal.”**

**Dr. Howard Gardner<sup>174</sup>**

As has been elaborated in the preceding section, storytelling is not just one of the oldest, but also one of the most powerful, forms of communication.<sup>175</sup> Stories contain a power so potent, not just because they are with us from birth;<sup>176</sup> but, also because they are easily remembered;<sup>177</sup> their narrative being much more compelling than facts and figures; their tales more affective than cold reason.<sup>178</sup> Indeed, stories hold such sway over the mind that memories are narratives in and of themselves, information being indexed, stored, and retrieved in the form of tales we tell ourselves.<sup>179</sup> On a social level, their power holds true, allowing us to make connections, form bonds, express ourselves and our experiences, and make sense of the world through the stories we tell to one another.<sup>180</sup>

It should come as no surprise then that marketers and academics alike have come to view storytelling, and the insights gleaned through narratology, as an interpretive tool to better understand the ways in which consumers structure, process, and judge their consumption experiences.<sup>181</sup> While those in academia have largely contented themselves to applying storytelling as an interpretative methodology of consumers’ intentions and behaviours, those in the corporate world, working in advertising, communication, branding, and management, have turned to stories as a means by which to better reach those listening.<sup>182</sup> As a tool, storytelling has proved itself effective time and again for manifold purposes: from affecting the perceptions of stakeholders; to differentiating a brand from its competitors; to shaping consumers’ purchase intentions; to building brand identity, credibility, and reputation.<sup>183</sup> The strength of stories has also been demonstrated from an internal

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<sup>174</sup> Gardner, H. <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/faculty/howard-gardner>

<sup>175</sup> Kaufman, B. (2003). Stories that sell, stories that tell. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 24(2), 11-15.

<sup>176</sup> Worth, S. E. (2008). Storytelling and narrative knowing: An examination of the epistemic benefits of well-told stories. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 42(3), 42-56.

<sup>177</sup> Lundqvist, A., Liljander, V., Gummerus, J., & van Riel, A. (2013). The impact of storytelling on the consumer brand experience: The case of a firm-originated story. *Journal of Brand Management*, 20(4), 283-297.

<sup>178</sup> Kaufman, B. (2003). Stories that sell, stories that tell. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 24(2), 11-15.

<sup>179</sup> Schank, R. C. (1999). *Dynamic memory revisited*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>180</sup> Fischer, W. (1985). The narrative paradigm: In the beginning. *Journal of Communication*, 35, 74-89.

<sup>181</sup> Adawal, R., & Wyer, R. S. (1998). The role of narratives in consumer information processing. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 7(3), 207-245.

<sup>182</sup> Escalas, J. E. (2004). Narrative processing: Building consumer connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(1&2), 168-179.

<sup>183</sup> Janssen, S., Van Dalen, C. K. A., Van Hoof, J. J., & Van Vuuren, M. (2012). Balancing uniqueness and similarity: A content analysis of textual characteristics in Dutch corporate stories. *Public Relations Review*, 38(1), 32-39.

perspective<sup>184</sup> as storytelling has been found to encourage employee engagement,<sup>185</sup> and as a fundraising and recruitment tool.<sup>186</sup>

Storytelling, with its demonstrable impact on the affective responses of listeners,<sup>187</sup> is an ideal tool by which to build a brand and should be a central focus of any communications strategy intended to strengthen the brand externally.<sup>188</sup> Inspiring consumers and captivating their imaginations through the use of stories is now seen as the principal means by which brands are able to forge meaningful, affective bonds with the public.<sup>189</sup> These emotional bonds lead in turn to more favourable associations with the brand and help to distinguish it for the sea of its competitors.<sup>190</sup> Moreover, well-crafted narratives which tell the story of a brand's origin have the proven potential to influence consumer perceptions,<sup>191</sup> even when those brands have fallen from public favour and have been long abandoned.<sup>192</sup> This is due to the persuasive effects of storytelling, as elaborated earlier in Chapter One.<sup>193</sup> Succinctly put, stories are simply more memorable than other forms of communication as they touch their listeners emotionally and factually: they have the power to both educate and move their audiences. Consumers who are exposed to brand stories have better brand experiences, better understand the benefits of the product or service, and have fewer negative perceptions overall.<sup>194</sup>

These effects can be explained by what is known as *narrative transportation theory*,<sup>195</sup> which postulates that when consumers are told stories they become immersed or otherwise absorbed by them, and thus transported. It is this process of transportation, in which narrative processing is given prominence over analytical processing, which imbues stories with their persuasive effects.<sup>196</sup> Narrative processing, it should also be noted, leads to fewer negative thoughts, stronger emotional responses, and a decreased ability to analyse critical arguments:<sup>197</sup> certainly an attractive state of affairs for those in the business of persuasion.<sup>198</sup> However,

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<sup>184</sup> Roper, S., & Fill, C. (2012). *Corporate reputation, brand and communication*. Harlow: Pearson.

<sup>185</sup> Ibidem..

<sup>186</sup> Fog, K., Budtz, C., & Yakaboylu, B. (2005). *Storytelling - Branding in practice*. Berlin Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag.

<sup>187</sup> Van Laer, T., Ruyter, K. D., Vsconti, L. M., & Wetzels, M. (2014). The extended transportation-imagery model: A meta-analysis of the antecedents and consequences of consumers' narrative transportation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(5), 797-817.

<sup>188</sup> Kaufman, B. (2003). Stories that sell, stories that tell. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 24(2), 11-15.

<sup>189</sup> Escalas, J. E. (2004). Narrative processing: Building consumer connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(1&2), 168-179;

Herskovitz, S., & Crystal, M. (2010). The essential brand persona: Storytelling and branding. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 31(3), 21-28.

<sup>190</sup> Lundqvist, A., Liljander, V., Gummerus, J., & van Riel, A. (2013). The impact of storytelling on the consumer brand experience: The case of a firm-originated story. *Journal of Brand Management*, 20(4), 283-297.

<sup>191</sup> Schmitt, B., Zarantonello, L., & Brakus, J. (2009). Brand experience: What is it? How is it measured? Does it affect loyalty? *Journal of Marketing*, 73(3), 52-68.

<sup>192</sup> Brown, S., Kozinets, R. V., & Sherry, J., Jr. (2003). Teaching old brands new tricks: Retro branding and the revival of brand meaning. *Journal of Marketing*, 67(July), 19-33.

<sup>193</sup> Thompson, C. J., Rindfleisch, A., & Arsel, Z. (2006). Emotional branding and the strategic value of the Doppelgänger brand image. *Journal of Marketing*, 70(January), 50L 64.

<sup>194</sup> Mossberg, L. (2008). Extraordinary experiences through storytelling. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 8(3), 195-210.

<sup>195</sup> Edson Escalas, J. (2004) Imagine Yourself in the Product: Mental Simulation, Narrative Transportation, and Persuasion, *Journal of Advertising*, 33:2, 37-48,

<sup>196</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>197</sup> Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2002). In the mind's eye: Transportation-imagery model of narrative persuasion. In M. C. Green, J. J. Strange, & T. C. Brock (Eds.), *Narrative impact: Social and cognitive foundations* (pp. 315-341). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

it is not enough to simply tell a story to engage an audience, for transportation to occur a certain level of attention must be paid to the crafting of a story on the part of the teller, and, on the part of the listener, a willingness to receive the message which the story imparts.<sup>199</sup> This process may be helped or hindered by idiosyncratic experience and preexisting knowledge of the story's topic, along with personal factors such as gender and education.<sup>200</sup> Despite the clear benefits of using storytelling as a means of persuasion, perplexingly stories continue to be an underexploited form of brand communication.<sup>201</sup>

### 1.2.1 Storytelling in Marketing: A History

**“And do you know what is the most-often missing ingredient in a sales message? It’s the sales message that doesn’t tell an interesting story. Storytelling - good storytelling - is a vital component of a marketing campaign.” - Gary Halbert<sup>202</sup>**

Working from the premise that storytelling is a natural human process by which individuals organise their experiences, the insights gained into the ways in which narration affects both perception and behaviour can be extrapolated to include consumption contexts.<sup>203</sup> Indeed, researchers and scholars working in diverse fields have begun studying how consumers view their exposure to and experiences with stories told by brands, a process which has only intensified in the years since the widespread introduction of social media.<sup>204</sup> From these studies has emerged an understanding of the four basic capabilities of brand storytelling, which can be defined as the ability: to give meaning and identity to a brand; to make sense of reality; to orient the consumer within the market; and, to understand and categorise the individual experiences of consumers.<sup>205</sup>

Understanding a story to be “an oral or written performance involving two or more people interpreting past or anticipated experiences”<sup>206</sup> in which a “series of events in a specific order, with a beginning, a middle and an end”<sup>207</sup> take place, we can further identify chronology, causality, and character development as being essential hallmarks of any story. In the context of brand storytelling, chronology implies that the narrative

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<sup>198</sup> Love, H. (2008). Unraveling the technique of storytelling. *Strategic Communication Management*, 12(4), 24-27.

<sup>199</sup> Van Laer, T., Ruyter, K. D., Vsconti, L. M., & Wetzels, M. (2014). The extended transportation-imagery model: A meta-analysis of the antecedents and consequences of consumers' narrative transportation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(5), 797-817.

<sup>200</sup> Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2002). In the mind's eye: Transportation-imagery model of narrative persuasion. In M. C. Green, J. J. Strange, & T. C. Brock (Eds.), *Narrative impact: Social and cognitive foundations* (pp. 315-341). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

<sup>201</sup> Barker, R. T., & Gower, K. (2010). Strategic application of storytelling in organizations. Toward effective communication in a diverse world. *Journal of Business Communication*, 47(3), 295-312.

<sup>202</sup> Halbert, G. (2003). <http://www.thegaryhalbertletter.com/>

<sup>203</sup> Chiu, H. C., Hsieh, Y. C., & Kuo, Y. C. (2012). How to align your brand stories with your products. *Journal of Retailing*, 88(2), 262-275.

<sup>204</sup> Delgado-Ballester, E., Fernández-Sabiote, E. (2016). «Once upon a brand”: Storytelling practices by Spanish brands.» *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, 20. 2, pp. 115-131.

<sup>205</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>206</sup> Boje, D. M. (1995). Stories of the storytelling organization: A postmodern analysis of Disney as Tamara-Land. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(4), 997-1035.

<sup>207</sup> Bennet, A., & Royle, N. (2004). *An introduction to literature, criticism and theory*. United Kingdom: Pearson Education Limited, p.55.

content of an advertisement be temporal, in essence, it too must have a beginning, middle, and end.<sup>208</sup> While causality necessitates that there be a temporal relationship between events in the advertisement: it must tell a story with an obstacle to overcome and a treasure to be won.<sup>209</sup> Finally, the protagonist of the story, be it in a 30 second spot or an epic, must reach the audience on an emotional level, revealing his or her psychological state in some way.<sup>210</sup> Thus, we can say that brand storytelling rests on the telling of a story, set within a factual or fictional framework, as a means to communicate something about the brand's origins, its founder and history, its highs and lows, its values and mission - in short, the brand's identity.<sup>211</sup> In order to do so effectively, a brand's story must be authentic, concise, reversible, and humorous; however, the value of each of these elements is dependent upon the product type experience, it should be noted.<sup>212</sup>

It should come as no surprise then that marketers have begun to exploit storytelling practices in order to improve metrics of marketing success, such as brand awareness and conversion rates.<sup>213</sup> The need to generate "valuable, relevant, and compelling content"<sup>214</sup> has driven marketers to shift their tact from creating transactional advertisements to *content*, stories which intertwine consumers' experiences, aspirations, and perceptions with brand initiatives.<sup>215</sup> At a strategic level, narrative content creation, and storytelling more generally, ties in seamlessly to the concept of branding, inasmuch as they both seek to engage with consumers effectively and affectively. At the heart of this desire is the need to communicate with the masses on a level which is intuitively understood by all; "a core story [that] is the set of brand values transformed into a single, unique, meaningful message, an expression of the company's culture."<sup>216</sup> Thus, it can be said that storytelling - as a marketing resource, a tool to regulate social relationships, a means of communication, a device by which to educate and train, and a management strategy - is one of the most powerful "persuasion weapons"<sup>217</sup> in any marketers arsenal.

Narrative has not always been part of the marketers' arsenal to the extent which it is seen today; however, it has been an essential medium by which to tell brands' stories for nearly a century, if not longer. As early as the 1930s in the United States and the advent of radio and television, it has been understood that stories

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<sup>208</sup> Delgado-Ballester, E., Fernández-Sabiote, E. (2016). «Once upon a brand»: Storytelling practices by Spanish brands.» *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, 20. 2, pp. 115-131.

<sup>209</sup> Delgado-Ballester, E., Fernández-Sabiote, E. (2016). «Once upon a brand»: Storytelling practices by Spanish brands.» *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, 20. 2, pp. 115-131.

<sup>210</sup> Deighton, J., Romer, D., & McQueen, J. (1989). Using drama to persuade. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16(3), 335-343.

<sup>211</sup> Fog, K., Budtz, C., & Yakaboylu, B. (2005). *Storytelling - Branding in practice*. Berlin Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag.

<sup>212</sup> Chiu, H. C., Hsieh, Y. C., & Kuo, Y. C. (2012). How to align your brand stories with your products. *Journal of Retailing*, 88(2), 262-275.

<sup>213</sup> Schembri, S., B. Merrilees, and S. Kristiansen. "Brand Consumption and Narrative of the Self." *Psychology & Marketing*, vol. 27, no. 6, 2010, pp. 623-637.

<sup>214</sup> Pulizzi, Joe. "The Rise of Storytelling as the New Marketing." *Publishing Research Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2012, pp. 116-123.

<sup>215</sup> Salmon C. (2008): *Storytelling. La fabbrica delle storie*, Fazi, Roma.

<sup>216</sup> Godin S. (2009), *All Marketers are Liars: The Power of Telling Authentic Stories in a Low-Trust World*, Portfolio, U.S.A.

<sup>217</sup> Salmon C. (2008): *Storytelling. The story factory*, Fazi, Rome.

are able to captivate audiences in a way that traditional advertisements cannot.<sup>218</sup> The soap operas of the early twentieth century, which were born out of long-form advertisements designed to promote and strengthen the reputation of detergent manufacturers, are just one example of this history.<sup>219</sup> Looking to the marketing strategies popularised in the 1950s and '60s, we see a holistic transformation of the industry.<sup>220</sup> In the heyday of advertising, the era of the so-called Mad Men, a transactional approach was the primary strategy in use, in which marketers concerned themselves with capturing an ever growing share of the market and volume.<sup>221</sup> However, as advertisements grew in their ubiquity, so too did consumer awareness and understanding of the mechanisms behind the campaigns, making it progressively more difficult to catch market attention and reach goals of scale.<sup>222</sup>

This led in turn to the development of the relationship model of marketing, which sought to foster long-term, two-sided relationships between consumers and brands; a task facilitated by an increasing reliance on storytelling.<sup>223</sup> It was no longer enough to enumerate the assorted benefits of a brand's products or services to sway consumers,<sup>224</sup> the public wanted to be told a story, to know where the brand began, where they are now, and what they plan to do in the future.<sup>225</sup> This process coincided with the zenith of mass communication brought about by the television which occurred in the 1980s, in which brands began to focus on conveying their value through the use of microstories.<sup>226</sup>

The economic and technological boom of the 1990s, and the widespread introduction on the Internet, only intensified the pace of communication, forcing advertising to become sharper, more graphic, and more intuitive.<sup>227</sup> These developments, in parallel to the rise of mass communication technology, have arrived at present in the digital era and the narrative worlds which exist on social media. Online storytelling, as will be further discussed in Chapter Two, places the brand in a subordinate role in the story, and instead positions the

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<sup>218</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>219</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>220</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>221</sup> Christopher M. (2002), *Relationship Marketing*. vol. [Rev. ed.], Routledge, EBSCOhost, lib.tcu.edu/PURL/EZproxy\_link.asp?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,uid&db=nlebk&AN=86066&site=ehost-live.

<sup>222</sup> Fransen, Marieke L., Peeter W.J. Verlegh, Amna Kirmani, and Edith G. Smit (2015), "A Typology of Consumer Strategies for Resisting Advertising, and a Review of Mechanisms for Countering Them," *International Journal of Advertising*.

<sup>223</sup> Christopher, M.(2002), *Relationship Marketing*. vol. [Rev. ed.], Routledge, EBSCOhost, lib.tcu.edu/PURL/EZproxy\_link.asp?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,uid&db=nlebk&AN=86066&site=ehost-live.

<sup>224</sup> Pham, M. T. H. (2013). Susie Bubble is a sign of the times: The embodiment of success in the Web 2.0 economy. *Feminist Media Studies*, 13, 245–267.

<sup>225</sup> Butcher K. (2018), *Tell me a story: applying storytelling concepts to marketing initiatives*, Departmental Honors in the Department of Marketing, Christian University, Texas.

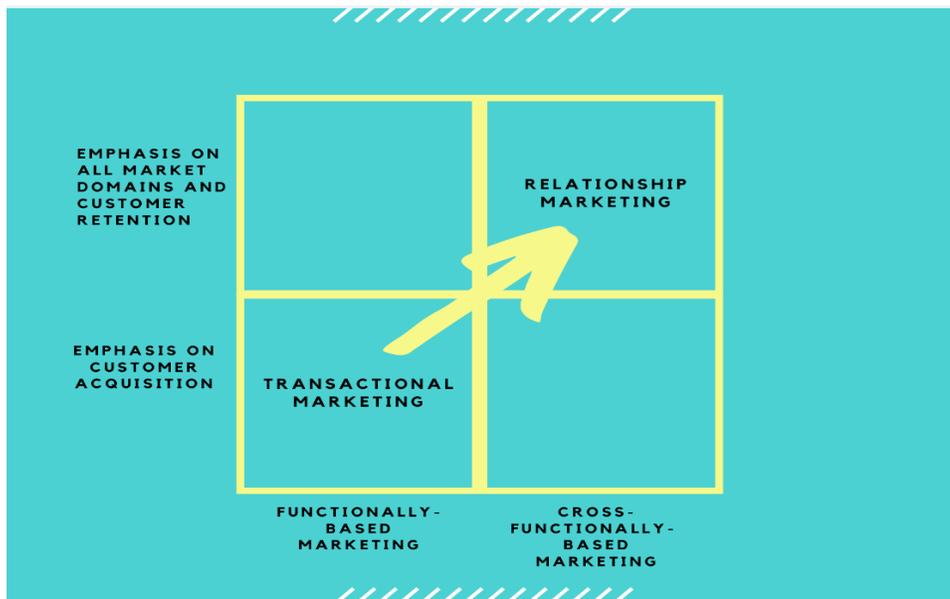
<sup>226</sup> See in this regard <http://www.ninjamarketing.it/2011/11/23/lim-Terrace-dello-storytelling-per-la-advertising/>.

<sup>227</sup> Christopher, M.(2002), *Relationship Marketing*. vol. [Rev. ed.], Routledge, EBSCOhost, lib.tcu.edu/PURL/EZproxy\_link.asp?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,uid&db=nlebk&AN=86066&site=ehost-live.

brand as the animus by which to shape the story and brings it into being, seeking to forge relationships and touch heart strings, not educate or inform.<sup>228</sup>

Relationship marketing attempts to establish contact with and, subsequently, consistent interaction with a customer, as a means by which to foster a sense of brand loyalty between the two parties. However, in order to implement an effective relationship marketing strategy, a business must first implement the strategy across all business functions so as to keep the strategy from being siloed to solely marketing objectives;” and second, it must emphasise “customer retention over customer acquisition.”<sup>229</sup> The diagram below illustrates the differences the relationship between transactional and relationship marketing:

**Figure 11. The relationship between transactional and relationship marketing - Christopher (2002)**



How did marketing arrive at this point? What has been the driving force behind the transformation which has occurred in the marketing world in recent years? The term *storytelling*, as understood not in the conventional sense but as applied to corporate storytelling, first emerged in the 1990s in the United States;

<sup>228</sup> See in this regard [http://www.ninjamarketing.it/2011/11/23/lim Terrace-dello-storytelling-per-la- advertising /](http://www.ninjamarketing.it/2011/11/23/lim-Terrace-dello-storytelling-per-la-advertising/).

<sup>229</sup> Christopher, M.(2002), Relationship Marketing. vol. [Rev. ed.], Routledge, EBSCOhost, lib.tcu.edu/PURL/EZproxy\_link.asp?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,uid&db=nlebk&AN=86066&site=ehost-live.

although, as indicated in the previous section, the concept itself is an ancient one.<sup>230</sup> Notwithstanding narrative's vast history as a more general tool of communication, education, and sense making of the world, the medium as applied to marketing can only be said to have gained prominence within the last fifteen years.<sup>231</sup> It is within this period of time that marketers have shifted their focus from the product, to its logo, to its story: from *brand image* to *brand story*, in effect.<sup>232</sup> Indeed, brand storytelling has never been more widely used as a marketing tool, and, aided by social media, never have stories spread more quickly or to a greater audience.<sup>233</sup> This has led to a situation in which stories created by brands are no longer in the complete control of those who produced them, so are effective are they are communicating their message.<sup>234</sup>

Despite the loss of control that storytelling may entail for brands, storytelling remains a powerful communication tool to be capitalised on, as is supported by the literature in the field.<sup>235</sup> This is due to the power of narrative to distinguish a brand from its competitors and ensure that it is perceived by consumers as being more than just another interchangeable and easily replaceable commodity.<sup>236</sup> In addition, it has been proven that storytelling leads to unique, positive brand associations, which serve to heighten brand equity;<sup>237</sup> better communicate brand values;<sup>238</sup> strengthen consumers' affective brand connections;<sup>239</sup> and encourage positive brand attitudes and purchases intentions.<sup>240</sup>

These positive aspects of consumer - brand relationships built on storytelling, however, do not come without their difficulties, the burden of which falling squarely on the business itself.<sup>241</sup> In order to forge long-term relationships with consumers, brands need to carefully consider the stories they tell and how they tell them.<sup>242</sup> The need for storytelling has grown so great in recent years that the position of Chief Storyteller or Chief Content Officer, a formerly unknown role in the era prior to the advent of social media, has become an essential position to be filled for untold companies.<sup>243</sup> Content creation, or the telling of stories as it may be rightly labelled, allows brands to shape compelling narratives that consumers want to be part of, which in turn increases word-of-mouth advertising, resulting in a heightened attachment to the brand by existing customers

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<sup>230</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea, p.116.

<sup>231</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>232</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>233</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>234</sup> Henning-Thurau, T., Malthouse, E. C., Frieger, C., Gensler, S., Lob-schat, L., Rangaswamy, A., & Skiera, B. (2010). The impact of new media on customer relationships. *Journal of Service Research*, 13(3), 311-330.

<sup>235</sup> Muniz, A.J., Schau,H.J.(2007).Vigilante marketing and consumer-created communications. *Journal of Advertising*, 36(3), 35-50.

<sup>236</sup> Kaufman, B. (2003). Stories that sell, stories that tell. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 24(2), pp.11-15.

<sup>237</sup> Lundqvist, A., Liljander, V., Gummerus, J., & van Riel, A. (2013),The impact of storytelling on the consumer brand experience: The case of a firm-originated story. *Journal of Brand Management*, 20(4), pp.283-297.

<sup>238</sup> Herskovitz, S., & Crystal, M. (2010). The essential brand persona: Storytelling and branding. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 31(3),pp. 21-28.

<sup>239</sup> Escalas, J. E. (2004). Narrative processing: Building consumer connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(1&2), 168-179. Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010),

<sup>240</sup> Chiu, H. C., Hsieh, Y. C., & Kuo, Y. C. (2012). How to align your brand stories with your products. *Journal of Retailing*, 88(2), 262-275.

<sup>241</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea, p.116

<sup>242</sup> Herskovitz, S., & Crystal, M. (2010). The essential brand persona: Storytelling and branding. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 31(3), 21-28.

<sup>243</sup> Pulizzi, Joe. "The Rise of Storytelling as the New Marketing." *Publishing Research Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2012, pp. 116-123.

and a rise in new followers.<sup>244</sup> Telling stories, by sharing thoughts and experiences, is such a powerful action that it can be likened to the pleasure we feel when we indulge in sex, food, and exercise - three activities with a rich literature on the effects they cause to the reward centre of the brain.<sup>245</sup> In addition, with the growth of so-called “second-screen technology,” such as tablets and smartphones, the ability to interact with consumers is even further heightened, allowing brands more frequent opportunities to tell their stories and create new occasions for customer engagement.<sup>246</sup>

This type of engagement, between brand and consumer, mirrors the traditional relationship between the storyteller and the audience, as truly effective narration not only communicates experience, but draws the listener in and prompts self-identification with the story; thereby engendering a level of personal investment in the story that would not otherwise exist. As has been noted by scholars such as Woodside, audiences best relate to stories through point of communion known as *indices*, which are formed round shared experiences that kindle a sense of connectivity between the storyteller, the story, and the audience.<sup>247</sup> In addition,

*Indices in stories can cause automatic (implicit) awareness, comprehension, and empathy among listeners/viewers...the more indices we have for a story that is being told, the more places the story can reside in memory. Consequently, we are more likely to remember a story [vs. a lecture] and to relate the story to experiences already in memory...the more indices, the greater the number of comparisons with prior experiences and hence the greater learning.*<sup>248</sup>

Looking to indices as specific moments within a narrative in which the storyteller, or content creator as it may be, has a heightened capacity to touch his or her audience on an emotional level leaving behind a memorable impact, reveals an opportunity for brand engagement that should not be underestimated. If storytelling as applied to marketing is understood as being more than just convincing a customer to purchase a product, but instead a process involving him or her in the narration of a relatable, emotionally resonant story, indices then serve as entry points into a life story in which may also include acts of purchase.<sup>249</sup>

Such indices are a fundamental component of mediating consumer-brand relationships through digital technology today, in which there is an “unprecedented scale to interactivity, viral marketing, and consumer-generated content.”<sup>250</sup> In as much, indices serve as unique opportunities for brand communication, in combination with the tools of modern consumer research, including: CDJ (consumer decision journey) analysis;

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<sup>244</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea, p.116

<sup>245</sup> Mancuso, J., & Stuth, K. (2014.), A Portrait of Modern Media, <https://www.ama.org/publications/MarketingInsights/Pages/a-portrait-of-modern-media.aspx>

<sup>246</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>247</sup> Woodside, AG.(2010) "Brand-Consumer Storytelling Theory and Research: Introduction to a Psychology & Marketing Special Issue." *Psychology & Marketing*, vol. 27, no. 6, pp. 531-540.

<sup>248</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>249</sup> Salmon C. (2008), *Storytelling. La fabbrica delle storie*, Roma, Fazi. p.34

<sup>250</sup> Dahlstrom, P, *et al.* (2019) *Digital and Multichannel Excellence*, McKinsey & Company. Accessed 30 April, 2019 <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/how-we-help-clients/digital-and-multichannel-excellence>

transactional analysis of clickstreams and online buzz; and Enhanced Marketing Mix Modeling (E-MMM).<sup>251</sup> These factors compose what is known as “Social Media GRPs,” which is a proprietary metric designed to measure brand impact on social media.<sup>252</sup> In addition, it may be used in a multi-channel context, to accelerate sales growth across channels, by indicating opportunities for engagement, such as the sort which is typically brought about by the usage of narrative techniques in the construction of content for social media.<sup>253</sup>

Within the myriad ways in which we as humans convey our experiences and inner worlds to the larger world around us exist many possibilities for engagement. We may use thought processes ranging from rational decision making to symbolic portrayals of self to communicate our beliefs, values, and priorities, but, in essence we have an “inherent desire to communicate who we are.”<sup>254</sup> Our social and cultural practices, including those centred on product consumption, are likewise means by which to relate our values to the world.<sup>255</sup> Indeed, brand consumption, the study of “how consumers use brands to construct their self through the utilization of emotions and interaction”<sup>256</sup> provides keen insights as to how individuals express their beliefs, values, priorities, and identity to the larger world around them, revealing correlations between political affiliations and value with even inconsequential, quotidian purchases.<sup>257</sup> Even in situations involving high-risk decisions and luxury products, the desire for consumers to express something of themselves to the world, to “makes a statement about me”<sup>258</sup> is present.

As has been proven time and again, the choices consumers make are intrinsically tied to the need for self-expression, a desire so potent that even brands themselves take on human traits in the customer’s mind, forming a humanistic relationship between the consumer and the product.<sup>259</sup> As has been illustrated by Fournier,<sup>260</sup> a brand has the capacity to be an active relationship partner, in either a two-way or three-way relationship between the brand, consumer, and/ or community opinion.<sup>261</sup> The extreme degree to which consumers associate and identify with chosen brand obligates marketers to craft stories which do not merely represent the brand, but also are relatable to the target audience;<sup>262</sup> a process which has only intensified with the

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<sup>251</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>252</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>253</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>254</sup> Goffman, E. (1959). The presentation of self in everyday life.

<sup>255</sup> Schembri S. (2009), « Reframing brand experience: the experiential meaning of Harley- Davidson », Journal of Business Research, Vol. 62, 1299-1310.

<sup>256</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>257</sup> Khan, M. 2018. How to Create a Mind-Blowing Instagram Video Strategy, April 2019, <https://www.jeffbullas.com/create-mind-blowing-instagram-video-strategy/>

<sup>258</sup> Maynard, M. (2007), Say “hybrid” and many people will hear “Prius.” *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>

<sup>259</sup> Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. Journal of Consumer Research, 24, 343-373.

<sup>260</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>261</sup> Belk, R. W. (1988), Possessions and the extended self. Journal of Consumer Research, 15, 139- 168.

<sup>262</sup> Butcher K. (2018), Tell me a story: applying storytelling concepts to marketing initiatives, Departmental Honors in the Department of Marketing, Christian University, Texas.

widespread introduction of the Internet in the early 2000s, and the subsequent emergence of social media platforms, like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and the ilk.

The growth of social media has radically altered our shared conception of storytelling, and with each new platform comes new challenges and new opportunities for marketers and their campaigns. The days of a one-way exchange between a company and a customer no longer exist, and storytelling has asserted itself as an increasingly effective and widely accepted tool to facilitate two-way communication between brands and their target audiences.<sup>263</sup> In contemporary marketing, therefore, a radically assessment of the industry's aims needs to be undertaken. It is not enough for the consumer to be satisfied by a particular product or service nowadays, instead the history, the identity, *the story* which accompanies the purchase needs to be conveyed to the customer. This heightened necessity has led to a situation in which, as some scholars have argued, “the need to believe in today's consumer brands can be compared to the need of the ancient Greeks to believe in their own myths.”<sup>264</sup>

### 1.2.2 Corporate storytelling, People storytelling

**“Marketing is no longer about the stuff that you make, but about the stories you tell.”**

**- Seth Godin<sup>265</sup>**

To summarise the findings of the preceding section, narration gives meaning where there was none, it organises information and experiences in a manner which is easily comprehensible to most, and helps us to define identity, forge bonds, and understand the greater world around us. Whether the story be mythical, emotional, allegorical, it generates a sense of belonging in its listeners and creates desire to engage and become involved:<sup>266</sup> an attractive proposition for any marketer. Storytelling constitutes: entering into a relationship with the other; revealing parts of oneself that are normally kept hidden; entertaining while involving the audience; and creating a connection along the way.<sup>267</sup> Brands, and they products and services they offer, cannot exist in isolation, they are dependent upon the world around them, with the exception being monopoly situations or dire necessity; therefore, it is incumbent upon marketers to engage with storytelling and learn how to tell a good story.<sup>268</sup>

The secret to storytelling is understanding what it is about stories that spark our imagination, touch our heartstrings, and cause us to identify with others. We need look no further than the entertainment industry to realise the power of narration. In 2017 alone, “Americans spen[t] \$10 billion a year going to movies and 35

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<sup>263</sup> Vu, Thu Thuy Medina, Siiri (2014), *Storytelling Marketing and its impact on Developing Company Brand Identity*, p.28.

<sup>264</sup> Lewis G. (1998), *L' Odyssée des marques*, Paris.

<sup>265</sup> Godin, S. (2018) <https://www.sethgodin.com/>

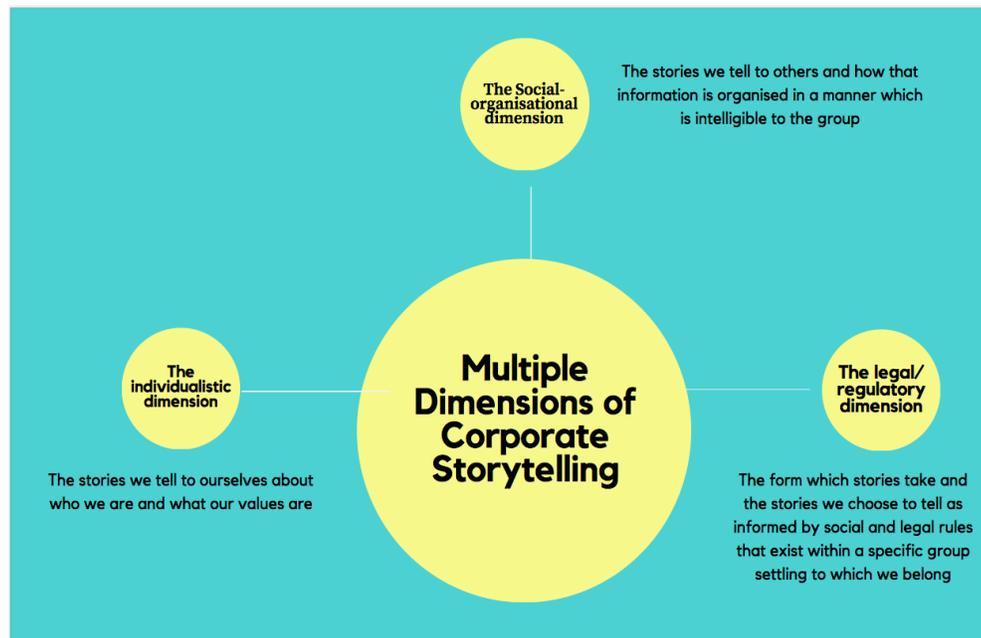
<sup>266</sup> Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli,p.35.

<sup>267</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>268</sup> Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli.

hours a week of TV. Add to that, video games are a \$15 billion industry.”<sup>269</sup> It has been postulated that entertainment generally, and the stories found in television, film, novels, and videogames more specifically, are so compelling because the narrative form they assume mimics the way in which our brains function. As communications expert Rob Biesenbach has noted, “when we hear a story, it triggers the same area of the brain as when we experience an event. There is little distinction between story and experience”<sup>270</sup> at a neurological level. Stories deepen emotion understanding and connection, transforming their audiences: an invaluable instrument for any brand attempting to reveal their value to a customer.<sup>271</sup> Corporate storytelling, like those narratives shared by individuals, contain multiple dimensions, as elaborated below:<sup>272</sup>

**Fig. 12 The Multiple Dimensions of Corporate Storytelling - Fontana (2016)**



*The individualistic dimension:* the stories we tell to ourselves about who we are and what our values are;

*The Social-organisational dimension:* the stories we tell to others and how that information is organised in a manner which is intelligible to the group;

*The legal/ regulatory dimension:* the form which stories take and the stories we choose to tell as informed by social and legal rules that exist within a specific group setting to which we belong.<sup>273</sup>

<sup>269</sup> Odell, Patty. “How to Unleash the Power of Storytelling in Marketing.” *Chief Marketer*, 15 April 2019, [www.chiefmarketer.com/how-to-unleash-the-power-of-storytelling-in-marketing/](http://www.chiefmarketer.com/how-to-unleash-the-power-of-storytelling-in-marketing/).

<sup>270</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>271</sup> Butcher K. (2018), Tell me a story: applying storytelling concepts to marketing initiatives, Departmental Honors in the Department of Marketing, Christian University, Texas.

<sup>272</sup> Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli.

<sup>273</sup> Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli, p.23.

It is essential to identify and clarify the dimension in which the stories told by brands function to better anticipate their impact on the public.

In corporate storytelling, the story of the brand, the work of the collective endeavors of a company are highlighted, including the brand's origins and history, the founder(s) and those employed, the processes by which the organisation carries out its activities, the product or service the brand offers, and, perhaps most importantly, the identity and values which the brand entails.<sup>274</sup> These stories are told from the perspective of consumption, which colours their telling and reception by the audience.<sup>275</sup> We can state, therefore, that storytelling serves a number of distinct purposes in the corporate world, some of which overlap with the functions of individual and organisational storytelling, and some of which are unique to brand narratives, as stated below:

1. As a means of organising mental activity, such as is seen in autobiographical memory and the concept of narrative as the defining feature of humanity, *homo narrans*;
2. As a device by which to generate value through consumption, *consumption narratives*;
3. As a socialisation tool and a means by which to create and share social knowledge, *epistemic gossip*;
4. As a means of day-to-day consumption, *lifestyle and experiential marketing*;
5. As a supervision process to regulate sensory input and to practise specific skills, *gatekeeping*;
6. As a educational aid that makes use of different forms of media to align the stories of individuals with the stories told by the group, *cohesion narratives*.<sup>276</sup>

As storytelling grows progressively more important to company promotion, further nuances and declinations of narration will doubtlessly emerge; however, what is clear from a close examination of the last fifteen years is that it is not enough simply to build a brand, we must begin to tell stories about it, stories which shape the brand's image and communicate its history and values in some essential way.<sup>277</sup> A communication strategy based on these principles, and fundamentally rooted in the desire to create a connection between “the creation, extraction and regeneration of the value of a brand”<sup>278</sup> forms a state in which all products are stories and marketing is storytelling.<sup>279</sup> Narratives, therefore, should be considered to represent a replenishable resource

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<sup>274</sup> Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli.

<sup>275</sup> Ibidem, pp.31-33.

<sup>276</sup> Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli, p.23

<sup>277</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>278</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>279</sup> Ibidem.

that can be exploited time and again as a means by which to generate inspiration, develop strategies, establish connections with consumers, and, ultimately, persuade customers to purchase a given product or service.<sup>280</sup>

### 1.2.3 Practical Insights for Marketers from Storytelling

**“Purposeful storytelling isn’t show business, it’s good business.”**

**- Peter Guber<sup>281</sup>**

Storytelling, traditionally, has been understood to be the telling of stories, however, in the contemporary world of business, it can also be understood to be an integral component of marketing and strategic planning; and, as a means by which to build brand identity, communicate brand values, and confer brand value.<sup>282</sup> Well-told stories, as has been suggested by Gunelius, understand how to employ the critical elements of fictional narratives and tell stories based on facts in tandem.<sup>283</sup> Using these tools, stories are able to not just project an image of a lifestyle desired to be representative of a brand, but can reinforce the consumer’s own lifestyle and values, thereby creating a positive association with brand identify. Furthermore, relatable stories that feel true to life have not only the ability to maintain strong tie ties with pre-existing customers, but are also able to attract new ones.<sup>284</sup> In the words of P&G corporate marketing director Roisin Donnelly, “Every story needs to have content and emotion...the brands that are really succeeding today are the ones that differentiate themselves through storytelling.”<sup>285</sup>

To successfully make use of storytelling, companies must rely upon strategic brand management: the considered design, creation, and execution of a brand.<sup>286</sup> Brand management is based upon the principle that long-term, trusting relationships between consumers and companies are built on emotional ties. Without the careful fostering and management of such ties, companies fail to add value to their brands, therefore impeding their ability to maintain and expand their customer base and, ultimately, their ability to succeed financially.<sup>287</sup> Advertising has traditionally been considered the most effective means by which to capture and retain the attention of consumers and is inherently well-suited to the application of narrative, as “every business regardless of its size or line of business has a story to tell and it is capable to improve their business results by using

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<sup>280</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea, p.101

<sup>281</sup> Guber, P. (2019) <https://www.peterguber.com/>

<sup>282</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>283</sup> Gunelius, S. (2013), 5 Secrets to Use Storytelling for Brand Marketing Success. Accessed 1 May 2019. <http://www.forbes.com/>

<sup>284</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea, p.101

<sup>285</sup> Bacon, J. 2013. Brand Storytelling: Narrative Theory. Accessed 27 April 2019. <http://www.marketingweek.co.uk/trends/brand-storytelling-narrative-theory/4007279.article/>

<sup>286</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea, p.101

<sup>287</sup> Vu, Thu Thuy Medina, Siiri, Storytelling Marketing and its impact on Developing Company Brand Identity, p. 28

storytelling to market their products.”<sup>288</sup> This begins with considering every transaction as an opportunity to tell a story and make a connection.<sup>289</sup>

In as much, storytelling should be understood as an essential tool for causing breakthroughs between brands and consumers, as Birkinshaw notes, “Storytelling has always been important in business, of course, but in today’s environment, with executive and investor attention stretched thin by information overload, the softer stuff is ever more important for getting ideas noticed.”<sup>290</sup> It is this “softer stuff,” the content which pulls on consumers’ heartstrings, which is at the root of any compelling, affective story, and has led many of those in the corporate world to engage with narrative in the hopes of reinventing their respective business models.<sup>291</sup>

Storytelling at a corporate level, moreover, shares many of the same traits as individual storytelling; however, its objectives vary in meaningful ways. While the goal of the stories we tell ourselves and others as individuals maybe expression or sense making generally, corporate storytelling seeks to share specific goals with the public and generate sense making operations.<sup>292</sup> In order to achieve these objectives, companies need to understand the type of stories that will compelling their audiences and how to tell such stories in an appealing manner. Without careful consideration of these two functional elements of narrative, stories lack credible persuasiveness.<sup>293</sup> It is not just enough to tell any story, any way, instead “in a story, you do not only weave a lot of information into the telling but you also arouse your listener’s emotions and energy...it demands vivid insight and storytelling skill to present an idea that packs enough power to be memorable”<sup>294</sup>

As an increasing number of companies are engaged in an attempt to master social media so as to reap the untold riches of the medium, it is incumbent upon marketers to look to every possible avenue in which storytelling exists to discover how storytelling may best be exploited.<sup>295</sup>

In service of this aim, it is argued by Aaker et al. that marketers must look beyond the private sector to the world of nonprofits to achieve engagement with audiences, which is defined as “truly making people feel

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<sup>288</sup> Matthews, R., Wacker, W. (2008), *What's Your Story? Storytelling to Move Markets, Audiences, People and Brands*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.

<sup>289</sup> Vu, Thu Thuy Medina, Siiri, *Storytelling Marketing and its impact on Developing Company Brand Identity*, p. 28

<sup>290</sup> Birkinshaw, J. (2018) *Telling a Good Innovation Story*, McKinsey & Company. Accessed 30 April, 2019 <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/innovation-and-growth/telling-a-good-innovation-story>

<sup>291</sup> Birkinshaw, J. (2018) *Telling a Good Innovation Story*, McKinsey & Company. Accessed 30 April, 2019 <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/innovation-and-growth/telling-a-good-innovation-story>

<sup>292</sup> Fontana A., (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: La guida definitiva*, Milano, Hoepli, p.89-90

<sup>293</sup> McKee, R. (2003). Storytelling that moves people: A conversation with screenwriting coach, Robert McKee. *Harvard Business Review*, 80, 51-55.

<sup>294</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>295</sup> Aaker, J., Smith, D., Singer, D. (2011) *The power of storytelling: what nonprofits can teach the private sector about social media*, McKinsey & Company. Accessed 30 April, 2019 <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/the-power-of-storytelling-what-nonprofits-can-teach-the-private-sector-about-social-media>

emotionally connected to helping you achieve your goals through storytelling, authenticity, and establishing a personal connection.”<sup>296</sup> In order to do so, marketers must create messages which:

*Empathise with your audience.* Audiences must be able to engage with the brand and manner which feel easily relatable, such as by using images which evoke a sense of empathy and shared experience.<sup>297</sup> This is most easily achieved through the telling of compelling stories which force audiences to consider the reality of the storyteller.<sup>298</sup>

*Emphasise authenticity.* Passion, when it is genuinely felt, is contagious, meaning that the more authenticity is conveyed, the greater connection is wrought.<sup>299</sup> This also extends to the need for transparency, as brand communication should be perceived as being heartfelt, as opposed to in service of a financial bottomline.<sup>300</sup>

*Match the media with the message.* How and where you the story is told is just as important as the content of the message.<sup>301</sup> Thus, mixed-media should be exploited whenever possible. In addition, the use of celebrity endorsers is highly effective.<sup>302</sup>

In addition, to fully exploit the power of storytelling in a marketing campaign, marketers need to think about more than just applying narrative structure or elements of character development to their work; rather, they need to place the ability to influence consumers’ emotions and psychology at the heart of their strategy. In order to tap into this ability, stories must contain these essential elements of persuasion:

*The story must express why and how change occurs in life:* as is further elaborated in Chapter 1.1, stories typically follow a conventional plot progression, from normalcy to conflict to resolution.<sup>303</sup> Compelling stories take their listeners on a journey in which the ordinary world is thrown off balance and the everyday is eschewed in favour of change through action. This results in a climax to the action, usually some form of transformation brought about by meeting a certain goal, after which the protagonist returns home, changed for the better, to set the world right again.<sup>304</sup> The same narrative structure and plot progression can be applied to marketing campaigns, whereby an ad becomes a journey and a conflict an ideal opportunity to highlight a product as a solution.

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<sup>296</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>297</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>298</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>299</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>300</sup> Ibidem.

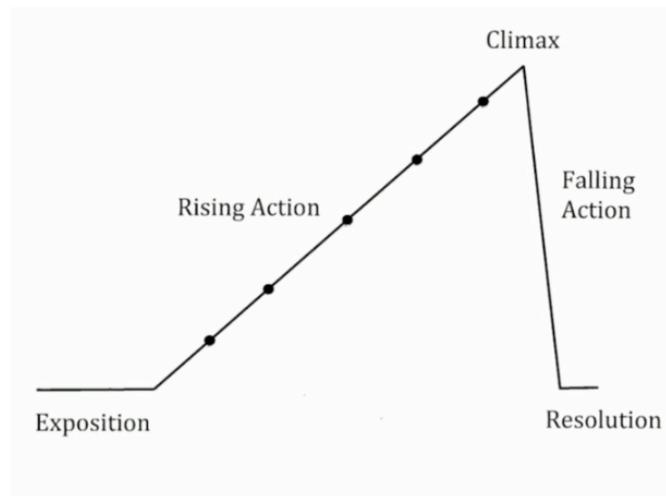
<sup>301</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>302</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>303</sup> Vu, Thu Thuy Medina, Siiri, Storytelling Marketing and its impact on Developing Company Brand Identity, p.28

<sup>304</sup> Woodside, A. G. (2010). Brand-consumer storytelling theory and research: Introduction to a Psychology & Marketing special issue. *Psychology & Marketing*, 27(6), 531-540.

**Figure 13. Traditional Narrative Plot - Vu (2016)<sup>305</sup>**



*Stories must also give a voice to skeptics:*<sup>306</sup> skeptics, those who “hunt for the truth beneath the surface of life, knowing that the real thoughts and feelings of institutions or individuals are unconscious and unexpressed”<sup>307</sup> should not be ignored or otherwise suppressed. Rather, by addressing the concerns and skepticism of the public, marketers are able to subtly build brand integrity, while, at the same time, tell credible, compelling stories.<sup>308</sup>

*A protagonist must be identified in the story:*<sup>309</sup> it is essential to establish exactly who is the main character of any given story, as it is he or she who leads the journey and is, generally, the character to whom and with whom the audience relates and identifies.<sup>310</sup> As the protagonist faces obstacles that impede his or her journey, the audience’s identification with the hero increases, rendering the story all the more effective.<sup>311</sup> In the context of marketing, due to the hesitancy and skepticism the general public has towards trusting the voice of brands, more effective inroads can be made by influencers.<sup>312</sup> On social media platforms, influencers are the protagonists and

<sup>305</sup> Vu, Thu Thuy Medina, Siiri (2014), *Storytelling Marketing and its impact on Developing Company Brand Identity*, p. 28

<sup>306</sup> Wachtman, E., & Johnson, L. S. (2009). The persuasive power of story. *Marketing Management*, 18(1), 28-34.

<sup>307</sup> Woodside, AG., (2010) "Brand-Consumer Storytelling Theory and Research: Introduction to a Psychology & Marketing Special Issue." *Psychology & Marketing*, vol. 27, no. 6, pp. 531-540.

<sup>308</sup> Hellber M., (2015), *Visual Brand Communication on Instagram: A study on consumer engagement*, Department of Marketing Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki.

<sup>309</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>310</sup> Woodside, AG., (2010) "Brand-Consumer Storytelling Theory and Research: Introduction to a Psychology & Marketing Special Issue." *Psychology & Marketing*, vol. 27, no. 6, pp. 531-540.

<sup>311</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>312</sup> Ibidem.

their position allows them to speak with an authenticity and credibility which can be difficult to otherwise achieve.<sup>313</sup>

By understanding these methodology elements of narratives, marketers are better able to craft stories that consumers can engage with; that feel credible and relatable; and are memorable. It is not enough to assume that by imposing narrative structure a campaign will become a compelling story, instead it must tell a story, in a recognisable fashion, that the audience actually wants to hear.

### 1.2.5 G.R.E.A.T: How to Tell a Compelling Story

**“At its very core, marketing is storytelling. The best advertising campaigns take us on an emotional journey – appealing to our wants, needs and desires – while at the same time telling us about a product or service.”**  
- Melinda Partin<sup>314</sup>

In the analytical scheme devised by Nguyen, whether or not a marketing campaign based on the storytelling model will succeed is determined by five basic elements, which compose the acronym G.R.E.A.T: *glue*, *reward*, *emotion*, *authentic*, and *target*.<sup>315</sup> These elements are addressed in the figure below:

**Figure 14. G.R.E.A.T and its Importance to Storytelling - Nguyen (2014)**



<sup>313</sup> Cole, N. “Your 2017 Instagram Strategy: Let Influencers Tell Your Brand Story.” *Inc.com*, Inc., 27 April 2019, [www.inc.com/nicolas-cole/your-2017-instagram-strategy-let-influencers-tell-your-brand-story.html](http://www.inc.com/nicolas-cole/your-2017-instagram-strategy-let-influencers-tell-your-brand-story.html).

<sup>314</sup> Partin, M. (2018) <https://www.linkedin.com/in/melindapartin>

<sup>315</sup> Nguyen, V.(JBI). 2014. Storytelling Marketing – Marketing bằng cách kể chuyện. Article from [jbi.nguyenvu.me](http://jbi.nguyenvu.me). Accessed 15 February 2019. <http://jbi.nguyenvu.me/storytelling-marketing-marketing-bang-cach-ke-chuyen/>

*Glue:* Glue is the connection between the message being marketed and what consumers trust in and know to be true. It identifies those consumers who already view themselves as being loyal to a given brand and aims to reinforce their perception of being type of person who buys a specific brand.<sup>316</sup>

*Reward:* Compelling storytelling is driven by a sense of reward, whether it is a quest to find a mythical treasure or more mundane, pragmatic goals, such as weight loss or financial success. By tapping into this desire for accomplishment, consumers can be engaged on a more effective level.<sup>317</sup>

*Emotion:* Great stories are those that not only capture the attention of their audience, but affect them emotionally. The heart, rather than the head, is often times the quickest and most effective route in influencing consumer behaviour.<sup>318</sup>

*Authentic:* Authenticity and credibility are key for any story to be effective. This does not mean, however, that every story must be verifiably factual, but it does mean that the story the brand tells must be true to the brand.<sup>319</sup>

*Target:* Successful stories are consistent with the target audience, meaning that they are designed from their conception to be appealing, relevant, and relatable to specific segments of the population, grouped by commonalities in behaviour, lifestyle, and perspective.<sup>320</sup>

Working from the model of assessment devised by Nyugen,<sup>321</sup> five key metrics by which to judge the efficacy of narrative-based marketing campaigns emerge, ideally to be applied as part of any strategic brand management scheme. In summarise, it is not enough for marketers to tell stories, they have to be compelling, and the most compelling stories weave elements of loyalty, conflict and reward, emotion, authenticity, and relevance to a specific target audience into their narratives.

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<sup>316</sup> Nguyen, V.(JBI). 2014. Storytelling Marketing – Marketing bằng cách kể chuyện. Article from [jbi.nguyenvu.me](http://jbi.nguyenvu.me). Accessed 18 February 2019. <http://jbi.nguyenvu.me/storytelling-marketing-marketing-bang-cach-ke-chuyen/> Ibidem.

<sup>317</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>318</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>319</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>320</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>321</sup> Ibidem.

## Conclusion

**"If you're going to have a story, have a big story, or none at all."**

**- Joseph Campbell<sup>322</sup>**

We all have our own stories to tell and we all have stories to which we relate so strongly that they begin to become our own. It should come as no surprise then that narratives hold sway over our hearts and minds in a way that facts and figures rarely do. Nor should it come as any great revelation that those in the business world have adopted storytelling as their own, making it one of the most commonly heard buzz-words of late.<sup>323</sup> “Stories make presentations better. Stories make ideas stick. Stories help us persuade,”<sup>324</sup> stories are, simply put, powerful. Successful brands not only need to have quality products, clear communication channels, and a well-defined target market nowadays, they must also be in possession of a compelling story which communicates the brand’s unique values, identity, and history in one fell swoop. Content creation is not enough, instead that content has to tell something meaningful about the brand in a relatable fashion. In a world where brands have become their own “macro-cosmos, the products naturally have become micro-narratives.”<sup>325</sup>

Within these macro-cosmos there exist significant “organisational efforts to communicate, differentiate, and enhance the brand *visà-vis* key stakeholders groups and networks. A corporate brand proposition requires total corporate commitment to the corporate body from all levels of personnel. Ongoing management of the corporate brand resides with the chief executive officer and does not fall within the remit of the traditional directorate of marketing.”<sup>326</sup> Corporate identity then can be understood to be the life force of any given company and an embodiment of its value: stories then are the conduit by which identity is expressed. Moreover, stories are the basis of micro-narratives for products, which are essential in securing a firm hold on the market and in the minds of consumers and stakeholders alike.

The challenges of narrative marketing, in fields various applications - advertising, promotion, products, propaganda, products and their packaging - over diverse forms of media - print, digital, online - will be elaborated in Chapter Two.

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<sup>322</sup> Campbell, J. (2018) <https://www.inc.com/dave-kerpen/you-need-to-become-a-better-storyteller-heres-some-inspiration.html>

<sup>323</sup> Vu, Thu Thuy Medina, Siiri (2014), Storytelling Marketing and its impact on Developing Company Brand Identity, p.26

<sup>324</sup> Snow, S. (2014). Why storytelling will be the biggest skill of the next 5 years. Article from Hubspot blog. Accessed 09 March 2019. <http://blog.hubspot.com/opinion/why-storytelling-will-be-the-biggest-business-skill-of-the-next-5-years>

<sup>325</sup> Vu, Thu Thuy Medina, Siiri (2014), Storytelling Marketing and its impact on Developing Company Brand Identity, p.26

<sup>326</sup> Baumer A., Magerko B. (2009), Narrative Development in Improvisational theatre. In second Joint International Conference on Interactive Digital Storytelling, Guimaraes, Portugal.

*Chapter Two*  
*The Art of Digital Storytelling*

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*“We tell ourselves stories in order to live. We interpret what we see, select the most workable of the multiple choices. We live entirely, especially if we are writers, by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by the "ideas" with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience.”*

*- Joan Didion<sup>327</sup>*

## **2. Digital Narratives: Storytelling Across Mediums**

Storytelling, as it has been traditionally understood, has often assumed to be the exclusive province of oral and written communication, primarily in the form of stories, tales, fables, and other canonical narrative forms. Albeit in recent decades, the definition of storytelling has been expanded to include media such as television, radio, and print; however, with the rise of the Internet in the first two decades of the twentieth century, contemporary storytelling, more often than not, takes place online and involves activities that go beyond conventional definitions of what storytelling entails. So, why do people tell stories? Does all the media content have to have a story?

Stories are important to people so that they are able to understand life.<sup>328</sup> The growth of new media forms such as those seen on social media, which have emerged in the digital era, have resulted in marked changes to the manner in which consumer tastes, preferences, and tendencies develop.<sup>329</sup> The Internet has signalled the coming of a profound transformation in the way in which information is created, collected, interpreted, and interacted with by the public, leading to a heightened need to examine the mechanisms behind storytelling and how they are affected by the medium through which they are broadcast.<sup>330</sup> A similar sort of reckoning has proceeded each major, technological advance of media, from the printing press to the introduction of 24-hours news;<sup>331</sup> nevertheless, the changes brought about by the Internet have had, perhaps, the greatest impact on storytelling. Surpassing the preceding four generations of communication technology- from speech to writing to print to broadcast<sup>332</sup> - digital storytelling takes one person’s story and gives its a platform to reach the world.

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<sup>327</sup> Didion, J. (2006). *The White Album*, New York: Knopf, p. 11.

<sup>328</sup> Beinhocker, E. D. (2006). *The Origin of Wealth: Evolution, Complexity and the Radical Remaking of Economics* (2nd Edition), Boston: Harvard Business School Press, p. 126-127.

<sup>329</sup> Alexander, L. (2018). What Is Digital Marketing? Retrieved from <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/what-is-digital-marketing>

<sup>330</sup> Konzal, A. W. (2011). *Entertainment Architecture: Constructing a framework for the creation of an emerging transmedia form* (Doctoral dissertation, Queensland University of Technology), p.36.

<sup>331</sup> Peters, J. D. (2008). *History as a communication problem*. (Ed. Barbie Zelizer). *Explorations in Communication and History*. New York: Routledge

<sup>332</sup> Scolari, C. A. (January 2009). *Transmedia storytelling: implicit consumers, narrative worlds, and branding in contemporary media production*. *International Journal of Communication*, (p.586-606).

As addressed in Chapter One, storytelling has been an essential part of the human experience for thousands of years, existing in all cultures and at all points of human history.<sup>333</sup> Human beings, it seems, have a profound, innate desire to tell stories, both to themselves and to others; nevertheless, until very recently, few individuals had a platform at his or her disposal by which to broadcast their experiences and ideas to the world. In contemporary society, however, the Internet which has acted as a prodigious leveller,<sup>334</sup> has allowed an even increasing number of everyday people to have access to an audience which hitherto would have been beyond belief. Today a teenage girl in her bedroom can conceivably have the same reach as an established media outlet. In the new media world of transmedia platforms, not only is more information available than ever before, but it is also possible to interact with content in ways that have never been possible before. Transmedia, as will be further elaborated in Chapter 2.1.1, as a communication technology strategy, allows stories to be told, shared, and retold, thereby ensuring their preservation.

### 2.1.1 Transmedia: A Platform for Digital Storytelling

**“Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today.”**

**- Robert McAfee Brown<sup>335</sup>**

Communication technologies, be they print or digital, rely upon storytelling as their foundation, so deep do the roots of narrative as a fundamental form of human communication run.<sup>336</sup> However, what differentiates transmedia storytelling from other more traditional forms of storytelling is the capacity of the audience to engage with the stories they are told, changing them in elemental ways, and transforming the audience from passive observers to active participants.<sup>337</sup> Moreover, at the heart of any successful transmedia experience is a meaningful story, one which touches its listeners and inspires its retelling, leading to the creation of new narratives with which to engage.<sup>338</sup>

Prior to the advent of the Internet, mass media entailed what we think of as being conventional channels of communication - television, newspapers, radio - platforms that are inherently one-sided and offer few avenues for active participation by the public.<sup>339</sup> Certainly, newspaper readers could take it upon themselves to write a letter to the editor to be published, just as listeners could call-in to their favourite radio programmes;

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<sup>333</sup> Boyd, B. (2009). *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition and Fiction*. Cambridge: Belknap Press.

<sup>334</sup> Konzal, A. (2011). *Entertainment Architecture: Constructing A Framework for the Creation of An Emerging Transmedia Form*, PhD Thesis, Dipl.-Kfm. European Business School, Oestrich-Winkel, Germany.

<sup>335</sup> Robert McAfee Brown Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 26, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/robert\\_mcafee\\_brown\\_177916](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/robert_mcafee_brown_177916)

<sup>336</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>337</sup> Snibbe, S. (2016). *An Industry Perspective of Transmedia Storytelling*.

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/transmedia-storytelling/lecture/KIDnA/an-industry-perspective-of-transmedia-storytelling>, Accessed 27th April 2019

<sup>338</sup> McIntyre, S. (2016). Welcome to Transmedia Storytelling, last seen 20th April 2019 <https://www.coursera.org/learn/transmedia-storytelling>.

<sup>339</sup> Ibidem.

however, these means of participation pale in comparison to the level of engagement seen in the new media era. Advances in communication technology such as social media sites, smartphones and tablets, and channels for video distribution, have accelerated the creation and spread of information.<sup>340</sup> In comparison to previous technological leaps which have occurred in the field of communication, the Internet can be said to be the most well-developed and to have brought about the most accelerated change to the accessibility of information.<sup>341</sup> This change has been readily embraced by a new generation of consumers who have now not only adapted to, but have come to expect access to information at an unforeseen speed and ease. The introduction of mobile devices has only accelerated this process, and, in doing so, further democratised the Internet as a system of communication. This has brought about an egalitarianism in media which has never existed before. However, the levelling of the playing field, as it were, which has followed in the wake of rapid advancement of internet technology has not just lead to the development of new communication strategies, it has also created an environment in which storytelling as a medium thrives and stories themselves are spread with increasing frequency. As Jenkins has noted, “Online, stories never die.”<sup>342</sup>

Turning to the communication strategies which have arisen as a consequence of the growth of the Internet, we arrive at the concept of transmedia storytelling, a term which, through it feels to be quintessentially modern in nature, actually has its roots in a history nearly as old as storytelling itself.<sup>343</sup> Transmedia storytelling is, essentially, the telling of a story on a multi-sided platform. For the Ancient Greeks this meant transposing an oral tradition to written word or physical form in the shape of statues,<sup>344</sup> this in turn led to other forms of storytelling, from novels to film; which in turn led to the concept of multimedia storytelling in the twentieth century; all of which have resulted in the transmedia storytelling which occurs online today.<sup>345</sup> What distinguishes multimedia story from transmedia storytelling, however, is the audience's ability to interact with media and become active participants in the story. The term, which was first coined by Marsha Kinder in 1991,<sup>346</sup> and later gained greater recognition through the work of Henry Jenkins,<sup>347</sup> has yet to have a commonly accepted definition.<sup>348</sup> Nevertheless, we can broadly state that “[t]ransmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own

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<sup>340</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>341</sup> Arthur, W. B. (2009). *The Nature of Technology: What It Is and How It Evolves*. New York: Free Press, p.186.

<sup>342</sup> Jenkins, H., Ford, S. and Green J. (2013). *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in A Networked Culture* (1<sup>st</sup> Edition). New York and London: New York University Press.

<sup>343</sup> Gambarato, R. R. (2013). Transmedia project design: theoretical and analytical considerations. *Baltic Screen Media Review*, 1, p.82.

<sup>344</sup> McDonald, R. and Parker, J. (Summer 2013). When A Story IS More Than Paper. 7/2013. *Young Adult Library Service*, p.27-31.

<sup>345</sup> Dille, F. (2016). *History of Transmedia Storytelling*, last seen 18 april 2019, <https://www.coursera.org/learn/transmedia-storytelling/lecture/KIDnA/an-industry-perspective: Evolution, ive-of-transmedia-storytelling>.

<sup>346</sup> Gambarato, R. R. (2013). Transmedia project design: theoretical and analytical considerations. *Baltic Screen Media Review*, 1, p.82.

<sup>347</sup> McDonald, R. and Parker, J. (2013), When A Story IS More Than Paper. 7/2013. *Young Adult Library Service*, p.27-31.

<sup>348</sup> Gambarato, R. R. (2013). Transmedia project design: theoretical and analytical considerations. *Baltic Screen Media Review*, 1, p.82.

unique contribution to the unfolding of the story.”<sup>349</sup> Working then from the definition first elaborated by Jenkins, transmedia storytelling is the unfolding of a narrative across multiple, distinct, media platforms with the intention of creating of multifaceted story.<sup>350</sup>

**Figure 15. *The Dispersion of Storytelling on Multi-Platforms - Jenkins (2013)***



As is elaborated in the figure above, different facets of the same story take shape on different platforms, from which a complete story is formed; none of these pieces stand alone, nor are they experienced in isolation. Rather, each part of the story is told on a different platform, and is told differently as a consequence.<sup>351</sup> Their differences, whether slight or significant, ideally create a sense of balance and serve to reinforce the overarching narratives of the story as a unique entity, a *story world* in and of itself.<sup>352</sup>

The concept of *world building* through narrative is predicated upon the notion that when stories are broken up and told across multiple platforms, the audience in turn follows these narrative bread crumbs from one platform to another, rendering the formerly passive listener an active participant in the narrative.<sup>353</sup> As an

<sup>349</sup> Jenkins, H., Ford, S. and Green J. (2013). *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in A Networked Culture* (1<sup>st</sup> Edition). New York and London: New York University Press.

<sup>350</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>351</sup> Scolari, C. A. (2009). Transmedia storytelling: implicit consumers, narrative worlds, and branding in contemporary media production. *International Journal of Communication*, (p.586-606).

<sup>352</sup> Gomez, J. (2010a), ‘About Starlightrunner Entertainment’, <http://www.starlightrunner.com/about>. Accessed 23 February 2019 ——. (2010b), *What Is Transmedia?*, <http://www.starlightrunner.com/transmedia>. Accessed 23 February 2019.

<sup>353</sup> Jenkins, H. (2009), *The revenge of the Origami unicorn: Seven principles of transmedia storytelling*, [http://henryjenkins.org/transmedia\\_entertainment](http://henryjenkins.org/transmedia_entertainment)

active participant, the audience has both the opportunity to engage with the story on an individual and a social level. In a consumption context, this means that not only will the consumer potentially have greater levels of brand engagement, but will also be more likely to spread the same story to other consumers across various platforms and channels of communication.<sup>354</sup> Consumer participation in the building of story worlds can take several forms: the creation of content on blogs, social media sites, and video hosting platforms; the sharing and forwarding of existing content; the ranking of content and commenting on said content online; and, the communication which occurs between fans and followers online.<sup>355</sup> Without these elements of audience, or consumer, participation, story worlds fail to materialise and cannot be said to be a transmedia project.

For a transmedia project to succeed in engaging its audience it must take a number of factors into consideration, beginning with devising a strategy for which platforms are to be utilised and how the story will unfold across said platforms.<sup>356</sup> It is generally advised that the story be told over at least three different platforms and that each platform contributes in some way the telling of the whole story, with consideration given to the sequencing and algorithms used.<sup>357</sup> In addition, considerations of cost, accessibility, functionality, relevance, and entertainment value for the consumer must also be made.<sup>358</sup>

*Cost principle:* multiple platforms must be utilised for the project to achieve active participation and the architect behind the story must be able to afford using as many platforms as possible.

*Accessibility principle:* the platforms must be easily accessible and available for consumers to facilitate participation.

*Functionality principle:* the platforms must function well without glitches or errors that demotivate consumers from participating.

*Relevance principle:* the portion of the story being told on a single platform must relate to the story as a whole to avoid confusing the consumer.

*Entertainment principle:* the consumer must enjoy participating in the story.<sup>359</sup>

Without these essential elements transmedia storytelling projects inevitably fail to succeed and should be a foundational consideration for all digital storytellers.

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<sup>354</sup> Zaluczskowska, A. ve Robinson, L. (2013). Bolton storyworld – You make the story? Assessing a transmedia narrative/work in progress. *Journal of Media Practice*, 14 (4), p.262.

<sup>355</sup> Gomez, J. (2010a), ‘About Starlightrunner Entertainment’, <http://www.starlightrunner.com/about>. Accessed 23 February 2019 ——. (2010b), What Is Transmedia?, <http://www.starlightrunner.com/transmedia>. Accessed 23 February 2019.

Jenkins, H. (2009), The revenge of the Origami unicorn: Seven principles of transmedia storytelling, [http://henryjenkins.org/transmedia\\_entertainment](http://henryjenkins.org/transmedia_entertainment)

<sup>356</sup> Deniz H. (2018), Transmedia Storytelling as the New Generation Storytelling form on media: “Rafadan Tayfa” Case Study, *The Online Journal of Communication and Media*, Volume 4, Issue 2.

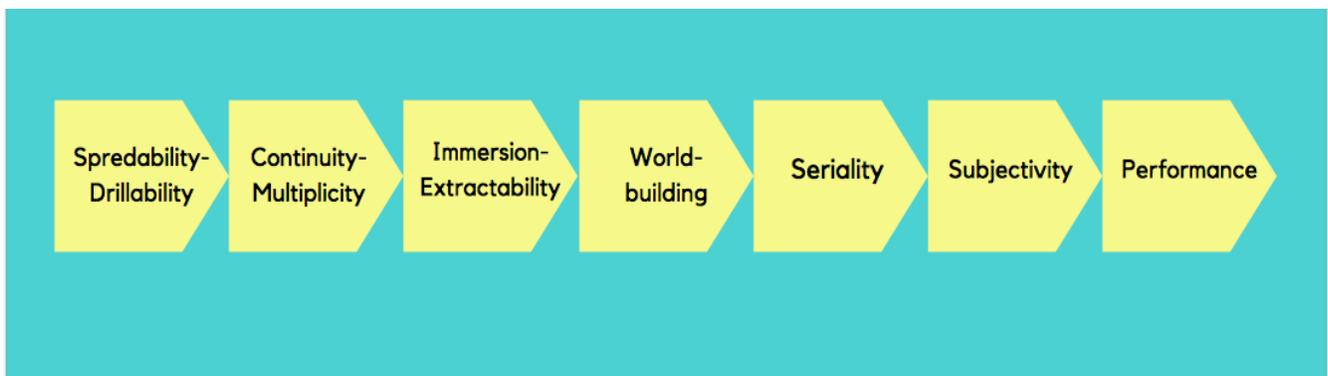
<sup>357</sup> Zaluczskowska, A. ve Robinson, L. (2013). Bolton storyworld – You make the story? Assessing a transmedia narrative/work in progress. *Journal of Media Practice*, 14 (4), p.269.

<sup>358</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>359</sup> McDonald, R. and Parker, J. (2013), When A Story IS More Than Paper, *Young Adult Library Service*, p.30-31.

In addition, the content designed for transmedia contexts can be analysed based on seven principles, as devised by Jenkins.<sup>360</sup> The first is identified in the contrast between *spreadability* and *drillability* that exists between the diffusion of narrative brand content, and the drillability which is obtained when it is possible to go deep into the stories, increasing the engagement of the public. The second principle concerns the contrast between *continuity* and *multiplicity*, that is the difference between narrative coherence and incoherence. The third principle consists of the search for a balance between *immersion* and *extractability*, therefore between the absorption of the reader or the viewer in the story and his or her ability to derive specific and particular indices from the narration. The other principle is that of *worldbuilding*, which is the construction of universes of meaning in which to place other narrative elements. Additionally, Jenkins identifies seriality, subjectivity, performance as key to the development of strategic narrative content.<sup>361</sup>

**Figure 16. *The Transmedia Narrative Act in the Model of External Corporate Storytelling - Giorgino and Mazzù (2018)***



Consumers are no longer satisfied playing a passive role in the consumption of media; whereas once audiences were content to watch a film or read a novel, they now want to be active participants in the narrative process, with constant accessibility to story and a guiding hand in its unfolding.<sup>362</sup> Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and the like have radically altered our perceptions of how stories are told and the role of the audience in telling them, making the audience not just the recipient but the hero of the narrative. In the era of digital storytelling, transmedia narratives, spread out on multiple platforms, tell stories in fragments, keeping

<sup>360</sup> Jenkins H.(2007), *Cultura convergente*, Milano, Apogeo

<sup>361</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea, p.124.

<sup>362</sup> Sandler, K. (2013), *Teaching media convergence. Cinema Journal*, 48 (3), p.84-87; Hefner, H. (2016), *An Industry Perspective of Transmedia Storytelling*. <https://www.coursera.org/learn/transmedia-storytelling/lecture/KIDnA/an-industry-perspective-of-transmedia-storytelling>.

their audiences riveted to the story as it plays out bit by bit, slowly coming together as one cohesive story.<sup>363</sup> In transmedia storytelling, therefore, audience participation is a guiding principle owing to the fact that audience involvement in the story can reduce their persuasive resistance.<sup>364</sup>

### 2.1.2 Digital Storytelling: Theory and Practice

**“Technology and social media have brought power back to the people.”**

- **Mark McKinnon**<sup>365</sup>

Storytelling, as has been previously addressed, is a constant of human experience; however, that does not mean that it is also static as a medium of communication. The emergence of new media, and, more specifically, the Internet and social media, has brought about significant changes to the medium in recent years. The narratives which are shared online, known as digital storytelling, take on many forms and are shaped by different understandings, intentions, characteristics dependent upon the field to which they are applied.<sup>366</sup> To better understand how digital storytelling can be applied to platforms such as Instagram, and to concepts such as human branding, we must first define what digital storytelling entails.

A relatively new concept, digital storytelling is a rapidly developing field of communication which has “emerged as part of broader cultural shifts, including a profound change in models of media communication.”<sup>367</sup> In essence, digital storytelling can be characterised as the application of canonical narrative conventions to the digital environment.<sup>368</sup> How these conventions of narrative are applied take on multifarious dimensions as stories which serve as their conduit may make the form of images, videos, text, memes, gifs, or any other form of media found online.<sup>369</sup> In doing so, a pleasurable union between the ancient craft of storytelling and modern communication technology is achieved, as has been noted by Nguyen. “There is always a pleasure in making stories of one's own life because the material is readily accessible, authentic and endearing; and the experience of narrating with multimodal means is new, exciting and inspirational. This is the power of storytelling coupled with the appeal of digital technology”.<sup>370</sup>

In the telling of stories online, there are different levels of participation which are afforded to the audience, from the relatively passive engagement which occurs when reading a web site on one end of the

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<sup>363</sup> Paez, S. (2016). *The Industry of Transmedia Storytelling*, <https://www.coursera.org/learn/transmediastorytelling/lecture/Kutop/sergio-paez-the-role-of-visual-storytelling>.

<sup>364</sup> Moyer-Gusé, E. and Nabi, R.L. (2010). Explaining the effects of narrative in an entertainment television program: overcoming resistance to persuasion. *Human Communication Research*, 36, (p.26–52).

<sup>365</sup> Mark McKinnon Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 28, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/mark\\_mckinnon\\_546881](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/mark_mckinnon_546881)

<sup>366</sup> Scolari, C. (2009). Mapping conversations about new media: The theoretical field of digital communication. *New Media and Society* 11(6) 1-22.

<sup>367</sup> Hartley, J. (2010) Digital storytelling around the world. In: 27th National Informatics Conference, Ankara, Turkey, p.23.

<sup>368</sup> Chung, S. K. (2007), Art education technology: Digital storytelling.

<sup>369</sup> Couldry, N. (2008), Mediatization or mediation? Alternative understandings of the emergent space of digital storytelling. *New media & society*, 10(3), p.374.

<sup>370</sup> Nguyen, A. (2011). *Negotiations and challenges in creating a digital story: The experience of graduate students*. PhD. University of Houston, p.25.

spectrum, to the full-engagement which takes place when the individuals are able to share their own stories on platforms such as Instagram.<sup>371</sup> With each medium through which digital storytelling transpires there are specific demands placed upon both the author and the audience. It is for this reason that social media and other forms of digital media are fundamentally different,<sup>372</sup> as on social media, it is incumbent upon the individual user to be both author and audience. As will be addressed in the following section, platforms such as Instagram provide a complete digital storytelling experience for their audience.

### 2.1.3 Digital Storytelling: Practical Applications for Advertising

**“Online, stories never die.”**

**- Henry Jenkins<sup>373</sup>**

As digital storytelling develops as a field, so too do the stories that we tell to ourselves and to each other. In the ten years following the widespread introduction of social media, we have witnessed a revolution in way in which entertainment is consumed, information is shared, and social bonds are formed, spurring academics and those working in the field of advertising and marketing to reexamine how stories are told and their impact on the world. The Internet, which has transformed seemingly every aspect of modern life, has revealed unforeseen opportunities for interaction and participation in storytelling, unsurprisingly. Individuals now have the freedom to choose not only the narrative he or she prefers, but to find the narrative to which the listener best relates.<sup>374</sup> Inasmuch, the Internet provides us with the ability to interact with media with a dynamism and interactivity, which is both stimulating and innovative, heightening the connection between the storyteller and the audience and blurring the divide between the two.<sup>375</sup>

For marketers, the obvious purpose of digital storytelling is connecting with customers; thus, by drawing upon storytelling’s well-documented ability to bring people together, forge connections, and inspire empathy between the protagonist and the audience, marketers are able to introduce products, and brands more generally, to new consumers effectively.<sup>376</sup> Due to the fact that stories allow for, and help to foster, emotional connection, this aspect of storytelling has been used extensively in recent marketing campaigns, especially on social media networks, where the expectation that experiences and stories are to be told by its users, has made it a natural

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<sup>371</sup> Lambert, J. (2013), *Digital storytelling: Capturing lives, creating community*, New York, Routledge.

<sup>372</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>373</sup> Jenkins, H., Ford, S. and Green J. (2013). *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in A Networked Culture* (1<sup>st</sup> Edition). New York and London: New York University Press.

<sup>374</sup> Boumans, J. (2004). “Cross-media, e-content report 8, ACTeN — Anticipating content technology needs”, Accessible at [http://www.acten.net/cgi-bin/WebGUI/www/index.pl/cross\\_media](http://www.acten.net/cgi-bin/WebGUI/www/index.pl/cross_media).

<sup>375</sup> Zambrano R.E. (2018), *Digital advertising storytelling: consumer educommunication*, n.1 Vol. 1, *International Review of Communication and Marketing Mix*, University of Cadiz, Spain.

<sup>376</sup> Jiménez-Marín, G; Pérez Curiel, C; Elías Zambrano, R. (2014): “Del valor educativo de los medios de comunicación: una aproximación al caso audiovisual”. *Ámbitos Review. International review of communication*, n.25.

fit.<sup>377</sup> Indeed, emotion-based storytelling campaigns have proliferated on social media in recent years to the point of near ubiquity. Examining these campaigns, three fundamental components of digital storytelling as applied to marketing emerge, as elaborated by Bourdaa:<sup>378</sup>

1. The story must contain some non-linear, non-traditional form of writing and/ or speech - *hypertext*;
2. The story must make use of different types of media, be they audio, video, animations *et cetera* - *multimedia*;
3. The user must be able to choose the story and to participate in its telling and the course it assumes - *interaction*.<sup>379</sup>

Inasmuch, the author, or architect, of the story is obligated to take on different roles than that of a traditional writing, ranging from: “writing, information manipulation, multimedia application management, graphic and collaborative design with design professionals or programming.”<sup>380</sup>

Moreover, as is argued by Garrido,<sup>381</sup> Bourdaa,<sup>382</sup> and Lehu<sup>383</sup> that for this type of storytelling to be successful, a number of principles must be applied first. First and foremost among these principles is the necessity to convey brand values to the consumer, without which no emotional connection can be made. Secondly, the story must have an emotional component which serves to connect the consumer with the brand. Additionally, the emotion need not be positive nor negative, it simply has to represent the identity which the brand wishes to convey. As a third consideration, marketers must highlight the positive aspects of the brand’s image and value, while also drawing attention to the goods and services said brand offers. Finally, in addition to being affective, the story must also be compelling. In other words, it must captivate its audience and attract the attention of new customers by offering something that the audience can engage with. With these components of effective, engaging storytelling in mind, we turn to the advantages of digital storytelling for marketers.

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<sup>377</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>378</sup> Bourdaa, M. (2012) “This is not Marketing. This is HBO: Branding HBO with Transmedia Storytelling”. *Networking Knowledge* 7(1).

<sup>379</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>380</sup> Zambrano R.E. (2018), *Digital advertising storytelling: consumer educommunication*, n.1 Vol. 1, *International Review of Communication and Marketing Mix*, University of Cadiz, Spain.

<sup>381</sup> Garrido, A. (2013), “¿Cómo aplicar el Storytelling a una campaña de marketing? Una nueva forma de entender la evolución del marketing de contenidos” *Puro Marketing*, Accessible at: <http://www.puromarketing.com/10/18647/como-aplicar-storytelling-campana-marketing.html>.

<sup>382</sup> Bourdaa, M. (2012) “This is not Marketing. This is HBO: Branding HBO with Transmedia Storytelling”, *Networking Knowledge* 7(1).

<sup>383</sup> Lehu, J. M. (2007). *Branded entertainment: Product placement & brand strategy in the entertainment business*. London: Kogan Page.

## 2.1.4 The Advantages of Digital Storytelling for Marketers

“Storytelling is ultimately a creative act of pattern recognition. Through characters, plot and setting, a writer creates places where previously invisible truths become visible. Or the storyteller posits a series of dots that the reader can connect.”

- Douglas Coupland<sup>384</sup>

The benefits of digital storytelling for marketers lie in the structure of social networks and how they facilitate communication amongst their users, in addition to the ways in which the myriad types of users, including influencers, Instagrammers, Youtubers, and bloggers, communicate on social media have brought storytelling to the forefront on these platforms.<sup>385</sup> However, what is radically different about storytelling through these channels is not the fact that individuals are choosing to share their own stories at ever increasing numbers, but that the audience a single individual can generate, posting their own content and without professional backing and expertise, is potentially enormous. Influencers and the like have an ability to create a connection with their audiences that is significantly higher than traditional, targeted advertising; and, in a world that feels more over-saturated with marketing campaigns than ever, forging connections and building bonds in a manner which feels authentic is increasingly important.<sup>386</sup> Digital storytelling, as is argued by Berelowitz *et al*, confers upon marketers and advertisers five specific advantages:<sup>387</sup>

*Connection:* digital storytelling grabs consumers’ attention in a way that traditional advertisements do not by pulling them in with a compelling, relatable story and causes the audience to feel a connection to the protagonist of the story, whether it be an influencer or a brand.<sup>388</sup>

*Identity:* stories engender a feeling of identity by connecting a narrative to the teller’s own life and experiences, making the communication feel wholly personal and unique to the audience. Accordingly, this type of communication helps consumers differentiate between users, or brands for that matter, and build a strong, easily distinguishable identity.<sup>389</sup>

*Brand Identification:* through storytelling, brands are able to shape a memorable message, which, in turn, helps consumers distinguish one brand from another and form a clear image of what the brand represents, its image and values.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> Douglas Coupland Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/douglas\\_coupland\\_583169](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/douglas_coupland_583169)

<sup>385</sup> Ramos Serrano, M., Jiménez-Marín, G. (2014), “Blogs y Moda: cuando los usuarios crean las tendencias” en Fernández-Quijada, D. y Ramos Serrano, M.: Tecnologías de la persuasión. Uso de las TIC en publicidad y relaciones públicas, Barcelona.

<sup>386</sup> Zambrano R.E. (2018), Digital advertising storytelling: consumer educommunication, n.1 Vol. 1, International Review of Communication and Marketing Mix, University of Cadiz, Spain.

<sup>387</sup> Berelowitz, M. (2012), 10 Ways Marketers are Using the Second Screen. JWT Intelligence, New York.

<sup>388</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>389</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>390</sup> Galician, M. (Ed.). (2004). Handbook of product placement in the mass media, New York, Haworth.

*Brand Image:* in the digital era, storytelling is the best way to communicate with consumers. Updating a brand's image through stories told on platforms, such as Instagram or Facebook, exploits both the language and structure native to the platform, but also does so in a fashion that is intuitively comprehensible for the audience. Especially when trying to engage with a younger market, storytelling on social networks equates to speaking to the natives in their own tongue, thereby refreshing and renewing the image of the brand in question.<sup>391</sup>

*Application:* perhaps the greatest advantage of storytelling is its application to a wide variety of digital marketing media due to its nature as a transversal form of communication. In addition, storytelling is novel, simple to use and understand, and generally well-received by audiences as long as the story is well-told.<sup>392</sup>

In addition to these factors, Edelman and Heller, writing for McKinsey & Company identify five essential steps necessary to bring marketing operations into the digital era.<sup>393</sup> As digital marketing operations constitute “the application, capabilities, processes, structures, and technologies to cost-effectively exploit and scale the interactivity, targeting, personalization, and optimization of digital channels...marketing operations has a critical role in driving bottom-line growth.”<sup>394</sup> Therefore, modern marketing operations need to engage with digital platforms in a fashion which does not merely involve headcounts or throwing money at digital marketing on social media; instead, digital marketing campaigns must be a well-considered and deliberate implementation of new processes, coordination, and governance encompassing five factors.<sup>395</sup>

The first of these aforementioned factors can be defined as truly understanding customers, which entails a commitment to tracking, analysing, and interpreting customer behavior and attitudes on an ongoing basis.<sup>396</sup> In addition, firms must commit to creating comprehensive customer-insights programs, through which to monitor, interact, and react to social-media conversations.<sup>397</sup> The second fundamental aspect of successful brand employment of social media is centred round delivering a superior experience to consumers. This entails ensuring that consumers do not encounter negative experiences with brand, and when they do rectifying the situation as soon as possible so as to repair the brand-consumer relationship.<sup>398</sup> In as much, the consumers' brand journey must be smooth, with marketing, sales, support, service, and operations playing an essential role

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<sup>391</sup> Berelowitz, M. (2012), *10 Ways Marketers are Using the Second Screen*. JWT Intelligence, New York.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>393</sup> Edelman, D., Heller, J. (2015) *How digital marketing operations can transform business*, McKinsey & Company. Accessed 30 April, <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/how-digital-marketing-operations-can-transform-business>

<sup>394</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>398</sup> Edelman, D., Heller, J. (2015) *How digital marketing operations can transform business*, McKinsey & Company. Accessed 30 April, <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/how-digital-marketing-operations-can-transform-business>

in managing expectations.<sup>399</sup> Digital tools may be exploited to good effect here to moderate this two-way flow of information, and ensure the optimisation of the customer experience.<sup>400</sup> As a third essential factor is selecting the right marketing technology, which involves choosing the best marketing technology to automate processes, personalise interactions, and coordinate actions, in the aim of better connecting customer experience and marketing operations.<sup>401</sup> Implementing processes and governance is the fourth factor listed and revolves around the need for establishing processes and governance to ensure that technology behaves as it should. And fifth and final factor identified can be termed, using the best metrics to drive success.<sup>402</sup> This final factor entails the use of technology to monitor, track, and manage the effectiveness of marketing investments.<sup>403</sup> The focus here should be on customised metrics designed “to identify future opportunities rather than focus on reporting what has already happened.”<sup>404</sup> When properly used, these factors work in tandem to form the basis of a well-developed, thoughtful, deliberate marketing campaign and are essential for marketing success on any of the current social media platforms on which such communication takes place today, to the enormous advantage of brands and marketers alike.

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<sup>399</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>400</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>401</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>402</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>403</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>404</sup> Ibidem.

**Figure 17. *The Big Five* - Edelman and Heller (2015)**

In the digital era, marketing operations must know how to exploit and scale the capabilities of digital channels cost effectively.



McKinsey&Company

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These advantages make digital storytelling an obvious choice for marketers and advertisers alike; however, the benefits of the medium are not boundless and there also distinct disadvantages to using narrative as a communication tool, as is further explained below.

<sup>405</sup> Edelman, D., Heller, J. (2015) *How digital marketing operations can transform business*, McKinsey & Company. Accessed 30 April, <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/how-digital-marketing-operations-can-transform-business>

## 2.1.5 The Disadvantages of Digital Storytelling for Marketers

“Storytelling isn't an Escher staircase.”

- Dave Morris<sup>406</sup>

As addressed previously in this thesis, storytelling is one of the most efficacious forms of communication, both between individuals and between groups, the latter as is seen the communication which occurs between consumers and brand; however, the medium is not without its disadvantages and should not be seen as a panacea. Rather, for storytelling to be effectively deployed as a means of communication, relationship building, and sense making, meticulous planning is first necessary.<sup>407</sup> Without doing so from the outset, there are a number of common pitfalls which would-be storytellers encounter, as are enumerated by Lundy and Martin.<sup>408</sup>

*Contradictory or confusing messages:* when contradictory or confusing messages are transmitted by the storyteller, the audience loses interest in the narrative. For instance, if the message is essentially a upbeat one, but told in a manner which conveys sadness to the listener, the message loses its power and ceases to be effective. For this reason, the message must be clear, straightforward, and without contradictory elements which detract from the core message.<sup>409</sup>

*Lies:* while it seems obvious, lying in storytelling is perhaps one of the most common mistakes made by digital storytellers. By lying, this does not mean that everything states must be strictly factual, there is certainly room for imagination and invention in narrative; however, it does mean that the message contained in the story must remain true to the preconceived elements, principles, and ideas of a brand.<sup>410</sup>

*Tone:* the power of storytelling lies in its ability to compel its audience. To do so, considerations need to be made as to the content, language, medium, and audience to which the story is told. In addition, the tone must be appropriate, for example, humour and satire may be well-suited for conveying a message about certain types of products, and entirely inappropriate for others. Careful deliberation must be made about what sort of tone best matches the brand's image and values prior to taking action.<sup>411</sup>

*Reaction:* ideally, stories are meant to provoke a reaction in their listeners that eventually leads to dialogue and relationship building; however, reactions cannot be forced nor can they be

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<sup>406</sup> Dave Morris Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/dave\\_morris\\_730093](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/dave_morris_730093)

<sup>407</sup> Zambrano R.E. (2018), Digital advertising storytelling: consumer educommunication, n.1 Vol. 1, International Review of Communication and Marketing Mix, University of Cadiz, Spain.

<sup>408</sup> Lundby K. (2008), Digital storytelling, mediatized stories. Self-representations in new media, Peter Lang Publishing, New York.

<sup>409</sup> Martin, C., (2011), The Third Screen: Marketing to your Customers in a World Gone Mobile, Nicholas Brealey Pub.

<sup>410</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>411</sup> Scolari, C. A. (2009), Transmedia Storytelling: Implicit Consumers, Narrative Worlds, and Branding in Contemporary Media Production, International Journal of Communication, 3, p.586-606.

perceived to be artificial or disingenuous. Instead, reactions that reinforce and strengthen the consumer-brand connection are built on authentic interactions.<sup>412</sup>

These disadvantages of digital storytelling can be overcome through careful planning and attention to detail, without which stories fall flat and fail to engage the attention of the audience in the manner desired by the storyteller. As will be further elaborated in the proceeding sections, digital storytelling is a natural choice for communication with users of social networks and, despite its challenges as a medium, should be considered as one of the primary tools for marketers in the twenty-first century.

## 2.2 Visual Storytelling

**“Visual storytelling is at once immediate and subversive.”**  
- Karin Slaughter<sup>413</sup>

Visual communication, much like written and oral narration, has been extensively studied from the perspective of art, science, psychology, and media sciences amongst others, as a phenomena which spans disciplines and mediums of communication.<sup>414</sup> Just as more conventional forms of storytelling seek to affect the listener both cognitively and affectively, so too do visual narratives strive to stimulate these same reactions in viewers.<sup>415</sup> Moreover, just as stories told by story architects are a means by which to convey information orally or textually, stories told visually are designed to communicate something essential through a given medium, which is then interpreted and understood through the filter of subjectivity by the viewer.<sup>416</sup> Accordingly, for the purposes of this thesis, conventional storytelling, as understood to be stories told or stories written, and visual storytelling are seen to be two complementary elements of the same narrative process. Furthermore, as much of the storytelling currently taking place on social media is predominantly visual in nature, it is of essence to understand how best to make use of both narrative tools to heighten their effectiveness as a whole and to weave stories which are best able to captivate audience’s hearts and minds.

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<sup>412</sup> Ibidem.

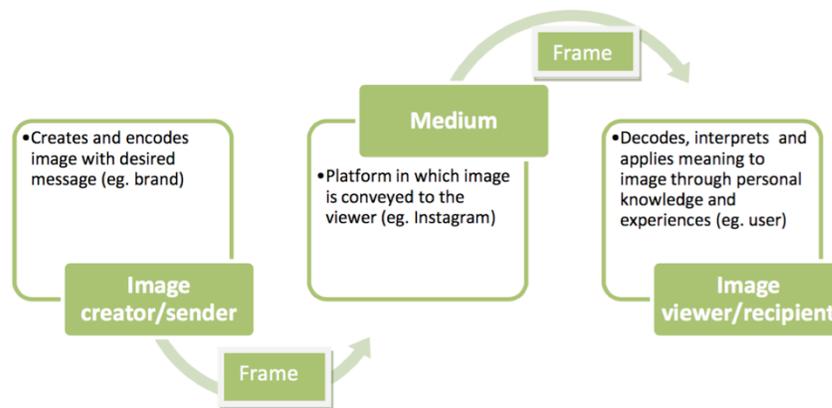
<sup>413</sup> Karin Slaughter Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/karin\\_slaughter\\_833998](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/karin_slaughter_833998)

<sup>414</sup> Smith, K., Moriarty, S., Kenney, K., Barbatsis, G. (2005), Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, Methods, and Media, Routledge, New York.

<sup>415</sup> Sojka, J. & Giese, J. (2006), Communicating through pictures and words: Understanding the role of affect and cognition in processing visual and verbal information. Psychology and Marketing. Vol. 23, no. 12, p.995-1014.

<sup>416</sup> Jamieson, H. (2007). Visual Communication: More than meets the eye, Intellect Books, Bristol.

**Figure 18. Simplified Overview of the Essential Components of Visual Communication - Jamieson and Smith (2005)**



### 2.2.1 Theories of Visual Storytelling

**“Visual storytelling combines the narrative text of a story with creative elements to augment and enhance the traditional storytelling process. By design, it is a co-creative process resulting in an intimate, interpretive, expressive technique.”**

- **Debbie Millman**<sup>417</sup>

As noted above, visual and verbal storytelling, are two complementary elements of narrative, with significant similarities between the two in terms of purpose and effect. This mirrors brain function and information processing systems, with the left hemisphere, which is responsible for analytical and verbal tasks, and the right hemisphere, for visual and emotional functions, representing two halves of the whole.<sup>418</sup> Moreover, though both halves are used by all people, their usage is asymmetrical, with one half becoming more dominant based on the information presented.<sup>419</sup> So too should we consider alternating and combining visual and verbal stories to create a more cohesive, efficacious narrative that appeals to both logic and emotion.

Brain function between the hemispheres is not equally balanced, nor should it necessarily be, as not only are different types of information processed differently, but so too are individuals inclined to process and remember information either visually or more verbally.<sup>420</sup> However, it should be noted, that there are also

<sup>417</sup> Debbie Millman Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/debbie\\_millman\\_915812](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/debbie_millman_915812)

<sup>418</sup> Jamieson, H. (2007), *Visual Communication: More than meets the eye*, Intellect Books, Bristol.

<sup>419</sup> Smith, K., Moriarty, S., Kenney, K. & Barbatsis, G. (2005). *Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, Methods, and Media*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>420</sup> Hellberg, M. (2015), *Visual Brand Communication on Instagram: A study on consumer engagement*, Hanken School of Economics.

individuals who appear to best respond to information that incorporates both types of elements.<sup>421</sup> Thus, narratives that are visual in nature impact consumer behaviour and attitude in a fashion which is largely dependent upon the individual consumer's personal inclinations and capacity to understand and interpret visual information.<sup>422</sup> Just as individual inclinations towards processing information are inconsistent between the hemispheres, so too are their effectiveness and speed in processing said information. Indeed, the right side of the brain, which processes information received visually and affectively, is nearly a tenth of a second faster than the left side.<sup>423</sup> For marketers this means that visual communication has an immediacy and comprehensibility which is heightened in comparison to textual approaches that allows for improved brand communication.<sup>424</sup> Considerations of how and how effectively individuals process visual information, therefore, are crucial when crafting brand messages.

Moreover, images have a profound influence on the perceptions and attitudes of consumers toward a given brand, especially when they are able to interpret the image easily and reach the conclusion intended by the story's architect, thereby transforming visual information into belief.<sup>425</sup> The perceptions and attitudes of the consumer are in and of themselves part of the creative process by which the audience relates to the content, and the ideas and concepts entailed within the brand.<sup>426</sup> Naturally, no two individuals will interpret the same image in the same fashion, as all interpretation is coloured by personal experience and mentality, with the individual viewer coming to his or her own conclusions about the message.<sup>427</sup> For marketers, and the brands they wish to promote, this implies that the visual messages encoded within images are not necessarily interpreted and understood identically by all viewers and, therefore, it is fundamental to carefully examine and analyse consumers' reactions and engagement with visual content to best understand how to target a specific audience.<sup>428</sup> Failure to do so will inevitably lead to ineffective, muddled communication between the brand and consumers.

However, having said that, it should also be noted that there has yet to be devised commonly agreed upon guidelines for how to create visual narratives, or how they ought to be interpreted for that matter; instead, the process of interpreting visual information is largely instinctive, with further precision in interpretation attributable to the cultural or social backgrounds of the narrative's viewers.<sup>429</sup> In addition, "denotation and

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<sup>421</sup> Fahmy, S., Bock, M., Wanta, W. (2014), *Visual Communication Theory and Research*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>423</sup> Jamieson, H. (2007). *Visual Communication: More than meets the eye*. Intellect Books, Bristol.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>425</sup> Mitchell, A. & Olson, J. (1981), Are Product Attribute Beliefs the Only Mediator of Advertising Effects on Brand Attitude?, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 18, p. 318-332.

<sup>426</sup> Jamieson, H. (2007). *Visual Communication: More than meets the eye*. Intellect Books, Bristol.

<sup>427</sup> Smith, K., Moriarty, S., Kenney, K. & Barbatsis, G. (2005). *Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, Methods, and Media*, Routledge, New York.

<sup>428</sup> Hellberg, M. (2015), *Visual Brand Communication on Instagram: A study on consumer engagement*, Hanken School of Economics.

<sup>429</sup> Walter, E. & Gioglio, J. (2014). *The Power of Visual Storytelling: How to use Visuals, Videos, and Social Media to Market Your Brand*. USA:

connotation play their parts in the interpretation and consequent understanding of images, where the former refers to images that have a more or less explicitly interpretable message, and the latter refers to the implicit connections made in the mind of the viewer.”<sup>430</sup> With these considerations in mind, it is perhaps useful then to turn to how visual information can be effectively communicated so that the intended message is clear to the viewer.

### 2.2.2 Hallmarks of Effective Visual Communication

**“As long as we are engaged in storytelling that moves the culture forward,  
it doesn't matter what format it is.”  
- LeVar Burton<sup>431</sup>**

It is natural to assume that the creator of an image hopes to have their work understood as he or she had intended. To ensure that the messages encoded within visual narratives are deciphered as envisaged, the creator must necessarily imbue the image with easily comprehensible ideas,<sup>432</sup> in addition to making strategic choices about composition, material, colour, and layout of the image.<sup>433</sup> The image then needs to be framed with a particular context by including certain aspects and excluding others, which helps to guide the viewer’s own interpretation and understanding of the information.<sup>434</sup> These frames are often social or cultural and compose the foreground on which images are viewed: without context, images become unmoored and, thus, significantly more complex to decipher. The ease by which images, and the messages contained within them, are understood is further impacted by the composition of the image. For instance, an image which is uncluttered and orderly concentrates the viewer’s attention with singular focus on the main subject of the image; whereas, images filled with seemingly irrelevant subject matter appear more authentic and relatable to the viewer.<sup>435</sup> The level of visual complexity, therefore, has varying effects on the ability to grab the attention of the viewer and the image’s long-term memorability.<sup>436</sup>

Visual interpretation and comprehension, therefore, should be a principal consideration in any social media communication strategy. That well-thought out images, which pay close attention to composition, framing, and content, and, which are designed to convey a clear message, are considerably more effective than

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McGraw Hill Professional.

<sup>430</sup>Hellberg, M. (2015), Visual Brand Communication on Instagram: A study on consumer engagement, Hanken School of Economics.

<sup>431</sup> LeVar Burton Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/levar\\_burton\\_439182](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/levar_burton_439182)

<sup>432</sup>Smith, K., Moriarty, S., Kenney, K. & Barbatsis, G. (2005). Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, Methods, and Media, Routledge, New York.

<sup>433</sup>Jamieson, H. (2007). Visual Communication: More than meets the eye. Intellect Books, Bristol.

<sup>434</sup>Fahmy, S., Bock, M. & Wanta, W. (2014). Visual Communication Theory and Research. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>435</sup> Jamieson, H. (2007). Visual Communication: More than meets the eye. Intellect Books, Bristol.

<sup>436</sup> Smith, K., Moriarty, S., Kenney, K. & Barbatsis, G. (2005). Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, Methods, and Media, Routledge, New York.

images that do not should come as no surprise.<sup>437</sup> However, what is revealing about the impact of visual narratives on social media, especially on Instagram as will be further discussed in Chapter 2.3, is that simplicity has proven itself to be one of the most effective tools of visual storytellers. While complexity is not always an impediment to effective communication, as recent research has unveiled, too much complexity often results in increased feelings of anxiety and angst, along with indecisiveness and after-purchase regrets, in consumers.<sup>438</sup> Consequently, a number of brands have set about streamlining their sites, product ranges, and channels for online shopping, in addition to simplifying their communication with consumers.<sup>439</sup> This movement towards greater simplicity has also been mirrored by communications agencies and marketers alike, who have set about actively promoting the concept in their work.<sup>440</sup> Indeed, the growth in popularity of visual storytelling generally, and visual brand communication more specifically, on platforms such as Instagram, should be seen as being a key element in the movement towards greater simplicity in the industry.<sup>441</sup>

Instagram's success has been attributed to the simplicity of its communication and streamlined approach to organising and displaying vast amounts of information visually.<sup>442</sup> A quick glance at the platform reveals a number of key features which help to differentiate Instagram from its competitors, the most notable feature of which is the predominantly visual nature of the medium and the lack of textual information. This seems to be a conscious strategy on the part of Instagram as it suggests refraining from posting unnecessarily discursive or wordy captions, in essence, anything that would "detract from the simplicity of the post."<sup>443</sup> However paradoxical it may seem, achieving simplicity is by no means *simple*. Rather, simplicity necessitates creativity and focus above all else, and can only be accomplished when thorough planning and knowledge are applied to both visual communication and social media communication strategies.<sup>444</sup> Conversely, while novel, attention-grabbing techniques may capture the short-term attention of viewers, their lifespan is short and the audience quickly loses interest after the initial viewing.<sup>445</sup> Therefore, simplicity of message and composition play a significant role in generating desired user reactions.

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<sup>437</sup> Freeman, K. & Spenner, P. (2012), To keep your customers, keep it simple, Harvard Business Review.

<sup>438</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>439</sup> Forbes (2014b). Marketers Have It Wrong: Forget Engagement, Consumers Want Simplicity. Available at: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/patrickspenner/2012/07/02/marketers-have-it-wrong-forget-engagement-consumers-want-simplicity/>. Accessed 19 March 2019.

<sup>440</sup> Siegel, Gale (2014), The Global Brand Simplicity Index. Available at: <http://www.siegelgale.com/the-global-brand-simplicity-index-gbsi/>. Accessed 19th March 2019

<sup>441</sup> Gallo C. (2013), Communications Coach – LeWeb, The Next 10 Years - Plenary 1 Day2, Paris [Video File]. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMCfgoGg5Ns&feature=player\\_detailpage](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMCfgoGg5Ns&feature=player_detailpage), Accessed 15th March 2019.

<sup>442</sup> Alba D. (2014b), Instagram Is Now Worth \$35 Billion, Eclipsing Twitter. Available: [http://www.wired.com/2014/12/instagram-now-worth-35-billion-eclipsing-twitter/#disqus\\_thread](http://www.wired.com/2014/12/instagram-now-worth-35-billion-eclipsing-twitter/#disqus_thread). Accessed 17 March 2019.

<sup>443</sup> Forrester (2014), Instagram Is The King Of Social Engagement. Available at: [http://blogs.forrester.com/nate\\_elliott/14-04-29-instagram\\_is\\_the\\_king\\_of\\_social\\_engagement](http://blogs.forrester.com/nate_elliott/14-04-29-instagram_is_the_king_of_social_engagement). Accessed 25 March 2019.

<sup>444</sup> Heinonen, K. (2011). Consumer activity in social media: Managerial approaches to consumers' social media behavior. Journal of Consumer Behaviour. Vol. 10, p. 356-364.

<sup>445</sup> Rossiter, J. R. (1982), Visual imagery: applications to advertising. Advances in consumer research. Vol. 9, no.1, p. 101-106.

In addition, visual storytelling's effectiveness is also shaped by the platform on which it is displayed, with each platform having its own distinct advantages and disadvantages for storytellers.<sup>446</sup> It is then incumbent upon the creator of the image to select the best platform by which to communicate with his or her audience, in consideration of how the medium affects the message.<sup>447</sup> Instagram, for example, requires all images posted to be cropped to a uniform size, thereby eliminating viewer biases that stem from image size and perceived prominence.<sup>448</sup> In addition, text is presented after images on Instagram, leading to greater attention being paid to the image initially and better recall by users in the long-run.<sup>449</sup> In comparison to other mediums, such as print media, which is dominated by textual, verbal information, image-based platforms such as Instagram provide an ideal environment for visual storytellers.<sup>450</sup>

### 2.3 Personal Storytelling

**“We're so complex; we're mysteries to ourselves; we're difficult to each other.  
And then storytelling reminds us we're all the same.”  
- Brad Pitt<sup>451</sup>**

Personal storytelling is special and emblematic hypothesis of how narration affects the representation and the self-image of an individual, and, therefore, the perception which each person has of the external world and his or her place within it. The stories we tell ourselves and others about ourselves has always had great power, even more so in the current reality in which we live, where new communication technologies, namely social media, have brought about sweeping changes to the ways in which stories are told and the audience to whom the story is communicated.

As has been shown previously, the impact of the Internet has led to fundamental changes to the autobiographical narratives and how they are broadcast to the world. Indeed, the ways in which one tells one's story today are endless. This has allowed brands to expand their range of action and reach a wider audience than ever before. As will be addressed in Chapter Three, social media has offered a platform from which everyday people, starting from a situation of initial anonymity, are able to make the most of the possibilities offered and have obtained exceptional results.

Personal storytelling has been associated, in particular, with experiential narratives, as is addressed in the work of Walter Benjamin,<sup>452</sup> Nikolaj Leskov, Einaudi, and Turin.<sup>453</sup> Through the insights garnered by their

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<sup>446</sup> Fahmy, S., Bock, M. & Wanta, W. (2014). *Visual Communication Theory and Research*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>447</sup> Jamieson, H. (2007). *Visual Communication: More than meets the eye*. Bristol: Intellect Books.

<sup>448</sup> Rossiter, J. R. (1982). *Visual imagery: applications to advertising*. *Advances in consumer research*. Vol. 9, no.1, p. 101-106.

<sup>449</sup> Schneider, A., Von Krogh, G., Jäger, P. (2013), “What’s coming next?” Epistemic curiosity and lurking behavior in online communities, *Computers in Human Behavior*. Vol. 29, no. 1, p. 293-303.

<sup>450</sup> Hellberg, M. (2015), *Visual Brand Communication on Instagram: A study on consumer engagement*, Hanken School of Economics.

<sup>451</sup> Brad Pitt Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/brad\\_pitt\\_757345](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/brad_pitt_757345)

narratological research, we can confidently assert that interest in stories increases when they are considered authentic and relatable, which arouses a feeling of identification in the listener. Narratives that are effective do so by relating engaging experiences as their focus, that feel as if they could be ordinary experience by ordinary people, often highlighting challenges or difficult situations.

Emphasis is placed in particular on experience, as it is from this that stories are generated. More precisely, personal storytelling can be defined as the set of rules concerning the autobiographical narrative applied to the most professional sphere.<sup>454</sup> Furthermore, a fundamental aspect of the narration of oneself is the continuity with which the story is told.<sup>455</sup> There is strong evidence of the importance of a daily narrative, as will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Three, which will be the object of analysis.

## 2.4 Digital Storytelling on Social Media and Instagram

**“Platforms - they come and go, but storytelling is forever.”  
- Michelle Phan<sup>456</sup>**

Any discussion of digital storytelling would be remiss not to include the stories that are told online using social media as a platform. On myriad social networks, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat amongst others, over 2.5 billion individuals are actively engaged<sup>457</sup> in forming and maintaining social ties, communicating their experiences and ideas, and reaching out to others in their communities, locally and globally. Although there is no one single definition of social media, it can be stated that social media is, broadly speaking, the act of creating, posting, and sharing content online for others to view.<sup>458</sup> Inasmuch, social networks act as platforms by which to facilitate conversation between users.<sup>459</sup> It is this element of social media, namely the creation of channels of conversation, which is of greatest interest to those concerned with the act of storytelling. As has been further discussed in Chapter One, storytelling is an inherently human action, which should be considered as a powerful tool in the process of relationship building, sense making, and communication, more generally. As it were, storytelling appears to be one of the most natural and intuitive communication strategies commonly applied to such platforms. One might say that, due to the innate structures upon which social media networks are built, storytelling is the *de facto* means of communication online at present; a fact which has not eluded marketers by any means. Just as social media has eased communication between individuals, so too have these types of networks opened up new channels of dialogue between

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<sup>452</sup> Benjamin W. (2011), *Il narratore. Considerazioni sull'opera di Nikolaj Leskov*, Einaudi, Torino, p.9.

<sup>453</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>454</sup> Bettini A., Gavatorta F. (2016), *Personal storytelling: Building narratives of effective Self*, FrancoAngeli, Milan.

<sup>455</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>456</sup> Michelle Phan Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/michelle\\_phan\\_743713](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/michelle_phan_743713)

<sup>457</sup> Number of social media users worldwide from 2010 to 2021 (in billions) Available on: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/> Accessed 26th April 2019.

<sup>458</sup> Agresta S., Bough B., Bonin B. (2010), *Perspectives on social media marketing*. E-book. Accessed 26<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

<sup>459</sup> Evans, K.R. (2006), *Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Relationship Marketing: A Meta-Analysis*, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol.70, 136-153.

consumers and brands.<sup>460</sup> With an ever growing number of individuals spending considerable amounts of time online,<sup>461</sup> it is incumbent upon brands, and those responsible for their brand communication strategies, to better understand how such platforms operate and how they can be best exploited.<sup>462</sup> In the digital era, brands must learn to adapt to social media in order to engage with consumers and extend their reach. Nevertheless, understanding how platforms function, and, more importantly, what kind of content users want to see, is no simple undertaking, as will be discussed in the proceeding sections.<sup>463</sup> Despite these hurdles, social media offers unique opportunities for individual users and brand alike to share their stories in a relatable, compelling fashion, thereby strengthening pre-existing relationships and forming new ties.<sup>464</sup> To best understand how social media has become such a powerful tool in the span of little more than a decade, it is worthwhile to first address the origins of the medium.

#### 2.4.1 The History of Social Media

**“Social media is not about the exploitation of technology but service to community.”**  
- Simon Mainwaring<sup>465</sup>

Before delving deeper into how social media can be harnessed as a strategic communication tool, it is perhaps useful to define what social media is exactly. Working from the definition devised by Haenlein & Kaplan, “Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.”<sup>466</sup> In essence, what separates social media from other types of content online is the expectation that its users are both the *creators* and the *consumers* of content, and, in the context of storytelling, they are both the *storytellers* and the *audience*.<sup>467</sup> As social media grows increasingly ubiquitous due to the rise of mobile devices, so too do the proliferation of stories told online. One needs look no further than any public setting to realise the impact that these platforms have had on communication: it is entirely commonplace to see people checking their Facebook, scrolling through Instagram, or responding to a tweet in nearly every conceivable setting. This perception of the

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<sup>460</sup> Agresta S., Bough B., Bonin B. (2010), Perspectives on social media marketing. E-book. Accessed 26<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

<sup>461</sup> The statistical Portal, Daily time spent on social networking by internet users worldwide from 2012 to 2017 (in minutes), available on: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/433871/daily-social-media-usage-worldwide/>, Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

<sup>462</sup> Kaplan, A.M., Haenlein, M. (2010), Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons* 53, p.59-68.

<sup>463</sup> Leuthesser, L., Kohli, C., & Suri, R. (2003). 2+ 2= 5? A framework for using co-branding to leverage a brand. *Journal of Brand Management*, 11, p35–47.

<sup>464</sup> Walter, E., Gioglio, J. (2014), *The Power of Visual Storytelling: How to use Visuals, Videos, and Social Media to Market Your Brand*, McGraw Hill Professional, USA.

<sup>465</sup> Social media is not about the exploitation of technology but service to community. Simon Mainwaring  
Read more at: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/simon\\_mainwaring\\_494031](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/simon_mainwaring_494031)

<sup>466</sup> Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010), Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53, p 59–68.

<sup>467</sup> Kucharska W. (2017), Consumer social network brand identification and personal branding. How do social network users choose among brand sites? , *Cogent Business & Management*, Management and Economy Faculty of the Marketing Department, Gdansk University of Technology, Poland.

omnipresence of social media is not just merely anecdotal, however, it is also supported by a bevy of statistics on usage and engagement which confirm how deeply enmeshed social networks are in everyday life.

With the average adult in the West currently spending a full 24 hours online each week,<sup>468</sup> the Internet, and more specifically, mobile devices play an enormous role in how we communicate, gather information, entertain ourselves, and engage in myriad other activities. According to a recent study by Statistica, the average adult spends 135 minutes each day on social media, a figure which has continually risen in the years since the first introduction of social media networks online.<sup>469</sup> In addition, the average adult user of social media has a total of 7.6 accounts,<sup>470</sup> with over 500 million active daily users on Instagram alone,<sup>471</sup> and Facebook has a further 372 million active daily users.<sup>472</sup> With roughly half of the world's population, nearly 3.5 billion users in total,<sup>473</sup> using social media - and a further 90% of brands, for that matter<sup>474</sup> - the growing importance of social media should not be ignored.

What is revealing about this figures, however, is not just the sheer number of users and time spent engaged on social media, but growing importance of the role of social media in everyday life. To better understand the impact of social media on society as a whole, and consumers more specifically, it is necessary to first make sense of the essential elements of which social media is composed. As defined by Peters, Chen, Kaplan, Ognibeni and Pauwels, social media consists of four fundamental elements, as defined below:

*Motive:* the reasoning, be it intellectual, social, or cultural, behind why individuals choose to engage with social media platforms and the enjoyment they derive from the use of social media in and of itself. This enjoyment may result from interacting with other users, sharing content, or from feeling oneself to be in line with the cultural norms and values established by the platform's community.<sup>475</sup>

*Content:* the content, in essence the *narratives*, posted on any given social media platform as analysed to determine quality, valence, and volume. Within such this analytical framework, questions of

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<sup>468</sup>A decade of smartphones: We now spend an entire day every week online, The Telegraph, Available on: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/08/01/decade-smartphones-now-spend-entire-day-every-week-online/> Accessed 29th April 2019.

<sup>469</sup>The Statistical Portal, Daily time spent on social networking by internet users worldwide from 2012 to 2017 (in minutes), accessed 29th April 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/433871/daily-social-media-usage-worldwide/>

<sup>470</sup>The Statistical Portal, Average number of social media accounts per internet user from 2013 to 2017, accessed 29th April 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/788084/number-of-social-media-accounts/>

<sup>471</sup>The Statistical Portal, Instagram - Statistics & Facts, accessed 29th April 2019 <https://www.statista.com/topics/1882/instagram/>

<sup>472</sup>The Statistical Portal, Number of daily active Facebook users worldwide as of 1st quarter 2019 (in millions), accessed 29th April 2019 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/346167/facebook-global-dau/>

<sup>473</sup>Hootsuite (2019), Waking Lives on Social Media (and Other Stats), accessed 29th April 2019, <https://blog.hootsuite.com/simon-kemp-social-media/>

<sup>474</sup>Hootsuite (2018), Hootsuite Social Barometer 2018 Social Media usage by organizations around the world, accessed 29th April 2019, <https://hootsuite.com/barometer>.

<sup>475</sup>Peters, K., Chen, Y., Kaplan, A., Ognibeni, B. & Pauwels, K. (2013), Social Media Metrics - A Framework and Guidelines for Managing Social Media. Journal of Interactive Marketing. Vol 27, p. 281-298.

purpose, narrative type, emotions conveyed, and the amount of content produced are examined.<sup>476</sup>

*Network Structure*: the size, connections, distribution, and segmentation of social networks in reference to the number of active users.<sup>477</sup>

*Social Roles and Interactions*: the communication and interaction of users with each other and amongst groups of users which are manifested in the three components of social media described above.<sup>478</sup>

These elements work in tandem to create the microcosms of interaction and communication which form the basis of storytelling on social media.

However, not all the communication which occurs on social media is identical; rather, it is shaped by the platform, each with its own inherent preferences and social mores, and the users of said network. This is an essential consideration for the development of effective brand communication strategies by marketers, as brand behaviour and engagement with consumers must be adapted to the environment of each platform.<sup>479</sup> For example, textual information, which is designed to be factual or informative, is best communicated through blogs, which offer brands the ability to speak directly to their audiences while maintaining control of the platform.<sup>480</sup> Whereas, content creation communities are primarily designed to act as a conduit by which to share a variety of different types of content - photographs, videos, gifs - with a reduced focus on connectivity and interactivity.<sup>481</sup> Instagram is a prime example of a content-based community, as it is predicated upon the concept of image sharing and storytelling, the purpose of which being the simple pleasure reaped from the scopophilic viewing of visual content.<sup>482</sup> On such a platform, brands can best communicate with easily understood, compelling images. Conversely, social networking sites, designed with the explicit aim of the creation of social media profiles, prove themselves useful in the creation of brand pages and profiles with which consumers can engage and interact.<sup>483</sup> Consumers interactions on these platforms can range from a simple 'like' to commenting on brand pages and the creation of dialogue between consumer and brand.<sup>484</sup> Inasmuch, the effectiveness of brand communication is greatly shaped not just by the content of the message, but the platform

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<sup>476</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>477</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>478</sup> Kaplan, A. & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*. Vol. 53, p. 59-68.

<sup>479</sup> Hellberg, M. (2015), *Visual Brand Communication on Instagram: A study on consumer engagement*, Hanken School of Economics.

<sup>480</sup> Kaplan, A. & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*. Vol. 53, p. 59-68.

<sup>481</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>482</sup> Hellberg, M. (2015), *Visual Brand Communication on Instagram: A study on consumer engagement*, Hanken School of Economics.

<sup>483</sup> Kaplan, A. & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*. Vol. 53, p. 59-68.

<sup>484</sup> Dholakia, U., Bagozzi, R. & Pearo, L. (2004). A social influence model of consumer participation in network- and small-group-based virtual communities. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*. Vol. 21, p. 241-263.

by which that message is conveyed to consumers. Careful consideration of the medium by which to tell a brand's story, and the marketing campaign which it bolsters, is essential to strategic brand communication.<sup>485</sup>

#### 2.4.2 Instagram: A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

**“It helps to see the world through a different lens, and that's what we wanted to do with Instagram. We wanted to give everyone the same feeling of Discovering the world around you through a different lens.”**  
- Kevin Systrom, founder of Instagram<sup>486</sup>

Turning to Instagram as the preeminent platform on which digital, visual, and personal storytelling occurs today, offers a number of key insights for marketers about how best to engage their audiences by telling simple, compelling, affective stories with the power to reach vast swathes of the population. With a staggering one billion active users in 2018-2019, and 500 million daily users,<sup>487</sup> Instagram holds an enormous sway over the communication and brand engagement habits of a significant proportion of consumers. Indeed, 70% of users investigate brands on Instagram,<sup>488</sup> an additional 80% of Instagram's users follow at least one brand's account,<sup>489</sup> and a further 75% of which take action at some point, such as visiting the brand's website and brick and mortar location, after viewing posts made by the brand.<sup>490</sup> These statistics alone are sufficient to convey the power of Instagram as a marketing tool in today's world,<sup>491</sup> as has been argued by DeMers, “Instagram has changed the world of marketing.”<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> Hellberg, M. (2015), Visual Brand Communication on Instagram: A study on consumer engagement, Hanken School of Economics.

<sup>486</sup> Kevin Systrom Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/kevin\\_systrom\\_752174](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/kevin_systrom_752174)

<sup>487</sup> The Statistical Portal, Number of monthly active Instagram users from January 2013 to June 2018 (in millions), accessed on 29 April 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/253577/number-of-monthly-active-instagram-users/>

<sup>488</sup> Iconosquare (2017), Instagram 2015 Study – Unleash the Power of Instagram accessed on 29 April 2019, <https://blog.iconosquare.com/instagram-2015-study-unleash-power-instagram/>

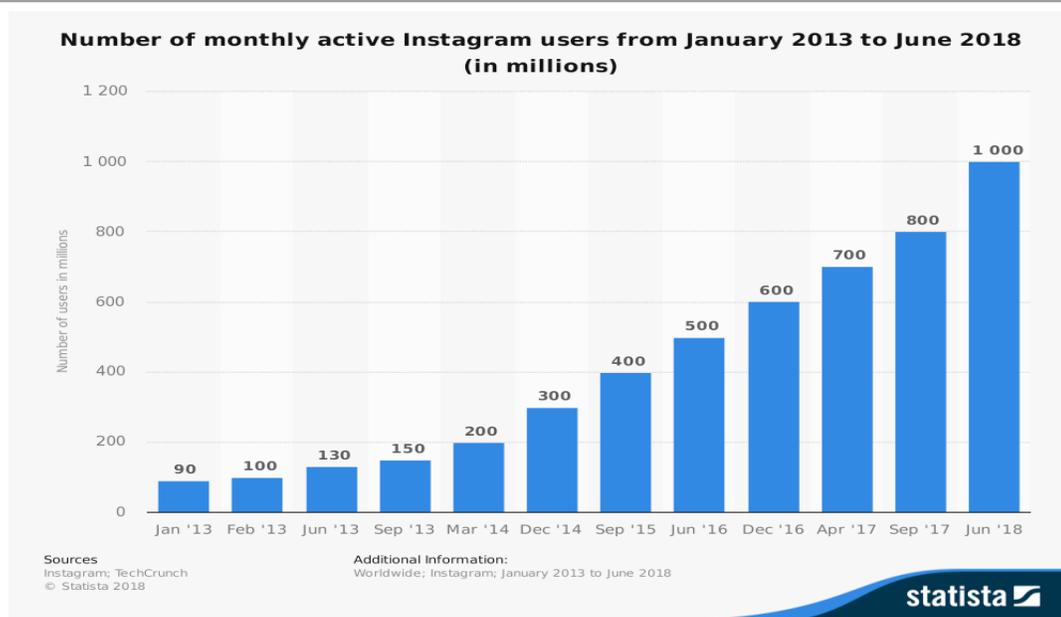
<sup>489</sup> Instagram Official WebSite, accessed 25 March 2019, <https://business.instagram.com/>

<sup>490</sup> Leonard, L. 2017. How Instagram is changing the design industry. Accessed 28th April 2019. <https://www.bdcnetwork.com/blog/how-instagram-changing-design-industry>

<sup>491</sup> Moreau, E. 2018. What is Instagram, anyway? Accessed 15th of March 2019. <https://www.lifewire.com/what-is-instagram-3486316>

<sup>492</sup> DeMers, J. 2017. Why Instagram Is the Top Social Media Platform for Engagement. Forbes. Accessed 26th April 2018. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jaysondemers/2017/03/28/why-instagram-is-the-top-social-platform-for-engagement-and-how-to-use-it/>

**Figure 19. Number of Monthly Active Instagram Users from January 2013 to June 2018 (in millions) - Statistica, The Statistic Portal (2018)**



How did Instagram arrive at such a position of prominence in the online world? Founded and launched by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in October 2010, it met with little success at the outset, facing strong competition from other better established platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter.<sup>493</sup> The impetus behind the development of the platform arose out of a desire to drive innovation in the field of digital photography, and Instagram's founders began with the concept of creating a community in which users could easily share images with one another. In the words of its creators, "We made it super-simple to share photos, not only with your followers in the Instagram community, but with Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr."<sup>494</sup> It was this simplicity in the uploading, sharing, and viewing of image which led to the rapid adoption of the platform by social media users and is responsible for its continued popularity as an application.<sup>495</sup> Indeed, the principles behind Instagram are quite easily understood: users on the free, mobile application take and post photos, which are cropped to a

<sup>493</sup> Laurent, Olivier. "The New Economics of Photojournalism: The Rise of Instagram." *British Journal of Photography*. September 3, 2012. Accessed 24 March 2019. <http://www.bjp-online.com/2012/09/the-new-economics-of-photojournalism-the-rise-of-instagram/>.

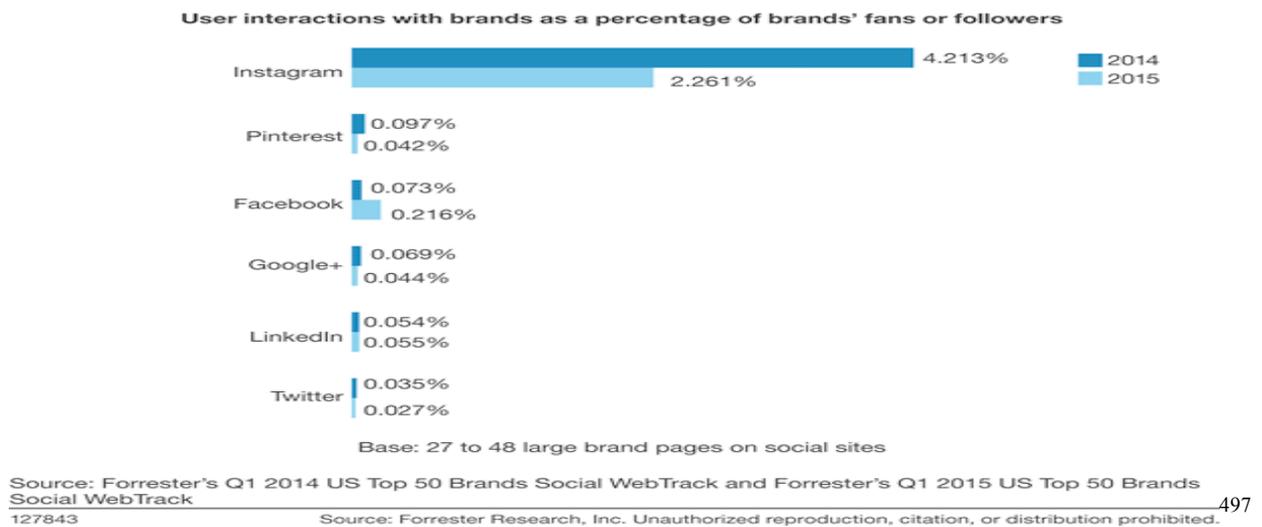
<sup>494</sup> Hollebeek, L., Glynn, M. & Brodie, R. (2014). Consumer Brand Engagement in Social Media: Conceptualization, Scale Development and Validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*. Vol. 28, p. 149-165.

<sup>495</sup> Brodie, R., Hollebeek, L., Juric, B. & Ilic, A. (2011). Customer Engagement: Conceptual Domain, Fundamental Propositions, and Implications for Research. *Journal of Service Research*. Vol. 14, no. 3, p. 252-271.

standard size, and displayed in reverse chronological order; and, sharing and categorisation is facilitated through the use of user tags, mentions, and hashtags, marked with @ and # signs respectively.<sup>496</sup>

Moreover, the simplicity of the platform as a tool of visual communication has facilitated storytelling, both verbally, in the form of Instagram Stories, and visually, through posted images, highly effectively. The increasing rates of usage, which has grown from 90 million to one billion in the span of five years, and engagement by users indicate the efficacy of the simplicity of this model, as illustrated in the figure below:

**Figure 20. User Interaction with Brands as a Percentage of Brands’ Fans or Followers - Elliott (2015)**

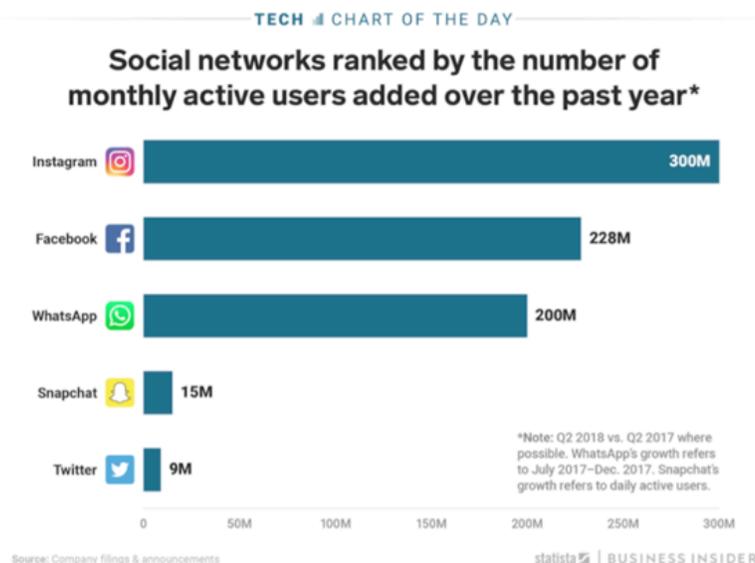


This remarkable growth in both active usage and consumer engagement speaks to the heightened importance of the platform in a brand’s social media portfolio. Instagram, which functions on the basis of visual narratives, offers a unique opportunity for brand’s to engage with consumers, harnessing the power of storytelling, as has been discussed in greater detail Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 respectively.

<sup>496</sup> Walter, E. & Gioglio, J. (2014). *The Power of Visual Storytelling: How to use Visuals, Videos, and Social Media to Market Your Brand*. USA: McGraw Hill Professional.

<sup>497</sup> Elliott N. (2015) *How Does Your Brand Stack Up On Facebook, Twitter, And Instagram?* accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> may 2019 <https://go.forrester.com/blogs/15-09-15-how-does-your-brand-stack-up-on-facebook-twitter-and-instagram/>

**Figure 21. Social Networks Ranked by the Number of Monthly Users Added Over the Past Year - Business Insider (2018)**



### 2.4.3 Instagram and User Engagement

**“In the past, people have looked at photos as a record of memory. The focus has been on the past tense. With Instagram, the focus is on the present tense.”**  
- Kevin Systrom<sup>498</sup>

Part of what makes Instagram so successful is not just the simplicity of its concept, interface, and usage, but the ways in which the application makes use of information processing systems in the brain. As discussed in the previous section, images are exceptional powerful tools of communication, understanding, learning, and representation. That fact that approximately 83% of all human learning<sup>499</sup> is acquired through visual, as opposed to verbal or textual, means alludes to the potential behind visual platforms, such as Instagram. Images, as has been proven time and again, are more memorable and more affective than other means of communication, thereby offering marketers greater opportunities to build emotional connections with consumers through visual narratives. In tandem with the mobile nature of the application, which allows brands to communicate with users at anytime and anywhere,<sup>500</sup> visual storytelling on Instagram offers marked benefits, providing the brand's

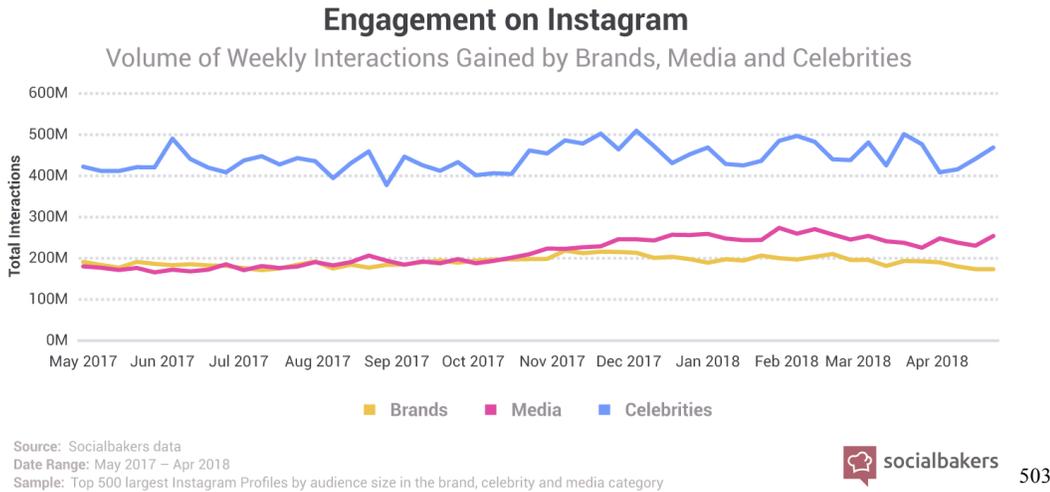
<sup>498</sup> Kevin Systrom Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/kevin\\_systrom\\_535928](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/kevin_systrom_535928)

<sup>499</sup> Scissons, M., Vo, J., & Sim, H. (2015), Instagram Marketing Strategy. E-Book. Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

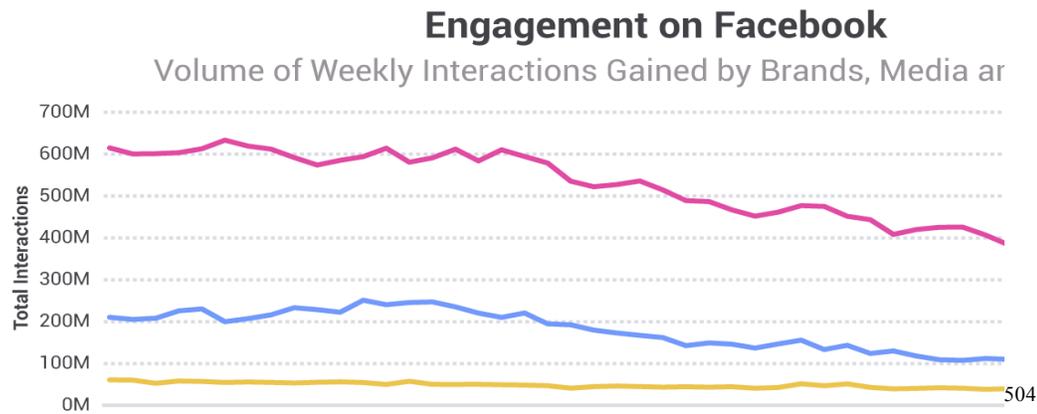
<sup>500</sup> Walter, E. & Gioglio, J. (2014). The Power of Visual Storytelling: How to use Visuals, Videos, and Social Media to Market Your Brand. USA: McGraw Hill Professional.

presence is well-suited to the overall aesthetics and atmosphere of the platform.<sup>501</sup> When done effectively, follower engagement is invaluable for brands, and Instagram images garner 23% more engagement than their Facebook counterparts<sup>502</sup>; it should be noted. By way of comparison, user engagement rates on both Instagram and Facebook respectively are illustrated in the figure below:

**Figure 22. Engagement on Instagram - Socialbakers (2018)**



**Figure 23. Engagement on Facebook - Socialbakers (2018)**



<sup>501</sup> Peters, K., Chen, Y., Kaplan, A., Ognibeni, B. & Pauwels, K. (2013), Social Media Metrics - A Framework and Guidelines for Managing Social Media. Journal of Interactive Marketing. Vol 27, p. 281-298.

<sup>502</sup> Business of Apps (2018) Instagram Revenue and Usage Statistics, <http://www.businessofapps.com/data/instagram-statistics/>

<sup>503</sup> Buryan, M. (2018) Engagement on Instagram: Everything You Need to Know. Available at <https://www.socialbakers.com/blog/instagram-engagement>. Accessed 19 March 2019.

<sup>504</sup> Ibidem.

In the increasingly fragmented world of social media, creating memorable and distinct messages by which to achieve this purpose, is progressively more challenging and, thus, it is of increasing importance to choose the best platform for your message.<sup>505</sup>

As previously discussed, Instagram imparts a platform by which brands are able to communicate their values and identity to an audience,<sup>506</sup> by allowing a broader, more cohesive image of the brand's story to emerge, which in turn leads to the humanisation, or personalisation, of the brand in the eye's of the consumer.<sup>507</sup> Facilitating communication and strengthening the relationship between consumer and brand are key steps in the process of consumer engagement, which is understood to be the liking, commenting, sharing, or following of a brand, and its posts, on Instagram. As has been noted, customers who engage with brands online by following them are more likely to be aware of developments in the brand and its activities more generally.<sup>508</sup> Therefore, the content which forms the basis of brand communication on Instagram plays an essential role in attracting and maintaining the interest of consumers.<sup>509</sup> In a society such as our own, where individuals are inundated with a seemingly infinite stream of content,<sup>510</sup> differentiating oneself from the pack and attracting audience attention is no simple undertaking, for individuals and brands alike, making effective brand communication with engagement as its aim crucial.<sup>511</sup>

However, despite the importance of engagement, very few brands take the time to understand why it is that certain posts seem to capture the interest and imagination of users and others miss the mark.<sup>512</sup> As has been suggested by communications consultant Stephen Lee, of communications company Milton, "companies are present in many social medias, but are not always utilizing the data gathered from these platforms to their advantage."<sup>513</sup> To fully reap the benefits of these platforms, brands need to first understand what content users engage with; how to build relationships with them based on said content; and how to harness the potential of word of mouth advertising, brand advocacy, and attitudes towards brands<sup>514</sup> in order to form strong ties with the consumer.<sup>515</sup> In essence, when brands realise what it is that their audience wants, they are able to better produce

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<sup>505</sup> Solis, B. (2011). *Engage! The Complete Guide for Brands and Businesses to Build, Cultivate, and Measure Success in the New Web*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

<sup>506</sup> Hexagon C.(2014), *Instagram Analysis and the Success of Visual Brands*. Available at: <http://www.crimsonhexagon.com/blog/brand-management/instagram-analysis-success-visual-brands>. Accessed 19 March 2019.

<sup>507</sup> Walter, E. & Gioglio, J. (2014). *The Power of Visual Storytelling: How to use Visuals, Videos, and Social Media to Market Your Brand*. USA: McGraw Hill Professional.

<sup>508</sup> de Vries, L., Gensler, S. & LeeFlang, P.S.H. (2012). Popularity of brand posts on brand fan pages: an investigation of the effects of social media marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*. Vol. 26, p. 83-91.

<sup>509</sup> Solis, B. (2011). *Engage! The Complete Guide for Brands and Businesses to Build, Cultivate, and Measure Success in the New Web*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

<sup>510</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>511</sup> Walter, E. & Gioglio, J. (2014). *The Power of Visual Storytelling: How to use Visuals, Videos, and Social Media to Market Your Brand*. USA: McGraw Hill Professional.

<sup>512</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>513</sup> Lee, B. K. (2004). Audience-oriented approach to crisis communication: A study of Hong Kong consumers' evaluation of an organizational crisis. *Communication Research*, 31, p. 600-618.

<sup>514</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>515</sup> Ibidem.

the content which is the basis of engagement.<sup>516</sup> To optimise said content, and ensure that it is successful, brands must look to the data and analytics of user engagement produced from previous posts.<sup>517</sup>

A careful examination of said data and analytics reveals the effect of so-called influencers<sup>518</sup> or ambassadors<sup>519</sup> on Instagram and the narratives they weave, as will be discussed further in Chapters Three and Four. However, before delving deeper into the world of Instagram influencers, the five fundamental propositions for customer engagement, as elaborated by Brodie *et.al.*, are defined as:

*Customer engagement (CE) is a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, cocreative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships. It occurs under a specific set of context-dependent conditions generating differing CE levels; and exists as a dynamic, iterative process within service relationships that co-create value. CE plays a central role in a nomological network governing service relationships in which other relational concepts (e.g., involvement, loyalty) are antecedents and/or consequences in iterative CE processes. It is a multidimensional concept subject to a context- and/or stakeholder- specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional and/or behavioral dimensions.*<sup>520</sup>

In addition, consumer engagement must be assessed in terms of the context in which it is grounded; the layers of social, cultural, and political meaning encoded within the images posted; and, the individual viewer's own preferences, mood, and *need for cognition*, which can be defined as extent to which the act of thinking is engaged in and enjoyed.<sup>521</sup> These elements of engagement are essential to the act of interpreting and understanding images and have a significant effect on the levels of engagement experienced by Instagram users.<sup>522</sup>

Moreover, the concept of Consumer Brand Engagement, which is currently emerging, is not yet univocal, making it significantly more difficult to assess and interpret; however, two crucial elements of brand engagement communication can be identified at present: *integration* and *involvement*. Integration refers to the complexity of the environment in which the brand operates, whereas incorporation refers to idea behind a given product and how it is presented to the consumer within a channel.<sup>523</sup> These aspects of consumer engagement are exceptionally efficient and effective, while, at the same time, intangible enough to be difficult to measure,

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<sup>516</sup> Walter, E. & Gioglio, J. (2014). *The Power of Visual Storytelling: How to use Visuals, Videos, and Social Media to Market Your Brand*. USA: McGraw Hill Professional.

<sup>517</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>518</sup> Peters, K., Chen, Y., Kaplan, A., Ognibeni, B. & Pauwels, K. (2013), *Social Media Metrics - A Framework and Guidelines for Managing Social Media*. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*. Vol 27, p. 281-298.

<sup>519</sup> Lee, B. K. (2004). Audience-oriented approach to crisis communication: A study of Hong Kong consumers' evaluation of an organizational crisis. *Communication Research*, 31, p. 600–618.

<sup>520</sup> Hollebeek, L., Glynn, M. & Brodie, R. (2014). Consumer Brand Engagement in Social Media: Conceptualization, Scale Development and Validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*. Vol. 28, p. 149-165.

<sup>521</sup> Cacioppo, J. T., & Petty, R. E. (1982). The need for cognition. *Journal of personality and social psychology*. Vol. 42, no. 1, p. 116.

<sup>522</sup> Hollebeek, L., Glynn, M. & Brodie, R. (2014). Consumer Brand Engagement in Social Media: Conceptualization, Scale Development and Validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*. Vol. 28, p. 149-165.

<sup>523</sup> Ibidem.

especially within the framework of traditional marketing channels and levers, as seen in more conventional forms of media.

As mentioned above, however, measuring user engagement, and, therefore, the success or failure of brand communication, is no mean feat. While the number of followers, likes, comments, and shares can easily be tabulated, these factors are not equally weighted<sup>524</sup> nor do they paint a complete picture of how consumers engage with brands. Indeed, there are whole masses of users whose engagement can be measured by none of these metrics: the lurkers who quietly populate social networks in vast numbers.<sup>525</sup> Lurking, which involves observing or viewing content without engaging with it in a calculable or visible fashion,<sup>526</sup> is notoriously difficult to measure. These users, who are unwilling to contribute to the dialogue for a multiple of reasons, consume content, but produce none of their own.<sup>527</sup> For this reason, lurkers, as a group, are often overlooked by marketers,<sup>528</sup> nonetheless, as Chen and Chang argue, these users actively engage with content, in meaningful ways, as a means of information-gathering, which may eventually “evolve” into active participation on the platform.<sup>529</sup> For this reason, we can say that lurkers are, rather, *listeners*, or the audience, to which brands tell their stories through content creation.<sup>530</sup> How brands engage these listeners is by attracting their sense of curiosity, which can be seen as a manifestation of the need to gather information, seek pleasure and entertainment, or reduce anxiety on the part of the consumer.<sup>531</sup> However, whatever the root of user curiosity, these listeners should be seen as actively engaging with content they consume.

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<sup>524</sup> Peters, K., Chen, Y., Kaplan, A., Ognibeni, B. & Pauwels, K. (2013), Social Media Metrics - A Framework and Guidelines for Managing Social Media. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*. Vol 27, p. 281-298.

<sup>525</sup> Huang, Y. C., Wu, F., & Cheng, Y. (2016). Crisis communication in context: Cultural and political influences underpinning Chinese public relations practice. *Public Relations Review*, 42, 201–213.

<sup>526</sup> Schneider, A., Von Krogh, G., & Jäger, P. (2013). “What’s coming next?” Epistemic curiosity and lurking behavior in online communities. *Computers in Human Behavior*. Vol. 29, no. 1, p. 293-303.

<sup>527</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>528</sup> Crawford, K. (2009). Following you: Disciplines of listening in social media. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*. Vol. 23, no. 4, p. 525-535.

<sup>529</sup> Chen & Chang 2013).

<sup>530</sup> Crawford, K. (2009). Following you: Disciplines of listening in social media. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*. Vol. 23, no. 4, p. 525-535.

<sup>531</sup> Schneider, A., Von Krogh, G., & Jäger, P. (2013). “What’s coming next?” Epistemic curiosity and lurking behavior in online communities. *Computers in Human Behavior*. Vol. 29, no. 1, p. 293-303.

## 2.4.4 Instagram as a Marketing Tool

“Instagram has changed the world of marketing.”

- Jason DeMers<sup>532</sup>

While Twitter and Facebook are well-established mediums by which marketers facilitate brand communication,<sup>533</sup> Instagram has proven to be a challenging platform by which to reach audiences in the past.<sup>534</sup> This, it should be noted, has not been the result of user resistance or complexity of the application. Conversely, respondents to surveys on brand communication have indicated that their perception of brand stories is largely positive and seen as a means by which to learn more about the personal side of the brand, making it more approachable and relatable.<sup>535</sup> Lack of resistance amongst users has not meant that Instagram has always been popular with marketers, however. As Miles notes, in the early days of the platform, it was seen more as a simple photo editing application, rather than the full-blown social network it has become.<sup>536</sup> After 2012, and its purchase by Facebook, the platform has gained much greater relevance, along with a significantly larger audience, and, thus, has positioned itself as a much more attractive environment for advertisers and marketers alike.<sup>537</sup> At present, Instagram is considered one of the premiere platforms on which to build relationships between brands and consumers today.

To fully reap the benefits of Instagram as a relationship building device, marketers must first devise a thoroughly considered marketing and communication strategy, as with any other given marketing channel. By devising a marketing strategy which bolsters the brand’s image and helps differentiate it from its competitors, and a communication strategy that communicates said image to both external and internal audience,<sup>538</sup> brands are able to harness the power of the platform and engage with its one billion active monthly users.<sup>539</sup> These two strategic planning elements, working in tandem, form the basis of any social media strategy, where every like, every comment, and every post should be a purposeful reflection of the brand’s image and overarching narrative.<sup>540</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> DeMers, J. 2017. Why Instagram Is the Top Social Media Platform for Engagement. Forbes. Accessed 26th April 2018. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jaysondemers/2017/03/28/why-instagram-is-the-top-social-platform-for-engagement-and-how-to-use-it/>

<sup>533</sup> Peters, K., Chen, Y., Kaplan, A., Ognibeni, B. & Pauwels, K. (2013), Social Media Metrics - A Framework and Guidelines for Managing Social Media. Journal of Interactive Marketing. Vol 27, p. 281-298.

<sup>534</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>535</sup> Walter, E. & Gioglio, J. (2014). The Power of Visual Storytelling: How to use Visuals, Videos, and Social Media to Market Your Brand. USA: McGraw Hill Professional

<sup>536</sup> Miles, J., G. 2014. Instagram Power: Build your brand and reach more customers with the power of pictures. United States of America.

<sup>537</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>538</sup> Walsh, M. 2016. The Difference Between Communication and Marketing: Part 1. Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> of November. 2018 <http://beyondim.com/the-difference-between-communication-and-marketing-part-1/>

<sup>539</sup> The Statistical Portal, Number of monthly active Instagram users from January 2013 to June 2018 (in millions)

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/253577/number-of-monthly-active-instagram-users/>

<sup>540</sup> LePage, E., Newberry, C. (2018), How to Create a Social Media Marketing Strategy in 8 Easy Steps. Accessed 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2019. <https://blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-create-a-social-media-marketing-plan/>

To better understand how to devise an effective social media communication strategy, we turn to the five steps which compose the process, as outlined by a research of Chicago State University.<sup>541</sup>

*Defining the mission:* the first step of any strategic plan is defining and understanding the mission that is to be undertaken;

*Identifying targets and outcomes:* after defining the mission, a set of goals should be determined as the desired outcome of the campaign;

*Defining the strategy:* arriving at a clear understanding of why the strategy exists and how the strategy will achieve the stated goals and outcomes of the mission;

*Defining criteria:* the setting of criteria by which to measure the effectiveness of the mission;

*Interpreting the results:* an analysis of the final outcome of a campaign, with an assessment of what was successful and what failed, what was accomplished, what needs to be changed, and how the process can be improved in the future.

**Figure 24. The Planning Cycle - Chicago State University (2012)**



<sup>541</sup> Chicago State University.com, 2012. The Planning Cycle. Accessed 12<sup>th</sup> April 2019, <http://www.csu.edu/strategicplanningresources/planningcycle.htm>

These key steps in the planning of any Instagram marketing strategy should reinforce the principles of effective visual storytelling as outlined in Chapter 2.2, support the overall image of the brand, and should underlie the simplicity of the platform, delivering a simple but sophisticated message from the brand to the consumer.<sup>542</sup>

On Instagram, the primary means by which brands communicate their messages is through the posting of content, making content strategy the heart of any Instagram strategy. Carefully chosen content, which is designed to appeal to a target audience, is crucial to the success of brands on the platform, and while what is posted must always be engaging and relevant, there are different tacks by which companies approach social media marketing. As defined by Pacis, there are four main strategies which dominate social media marketing at present: *product-centric*, *culture-centric*, *mixed strategy*, and *user-generated*.<sup>543</sup> *Product-centric* strategies, which are the most commonly seen type of Instagram marketing strategy, have the brand's products as its sole focus.<sup>544</sup> This straightforward approach is informative, while also being effective, and has been exceptionally successful for companies such as Marimekko.<sup>545</sup> A *culture-centric* strategy, on the other hand, is the logical choice for brands with a clearly defined and recognisable culture. This type of strategy, which rests on the principle of promoting the brand's unique identity and culture, is useful for differentiating brands from their competitors and has been put to good use for companies such as Nike.<sup>546</sup> In addition, these two strategies can be *mixed* and combined, and, when done correctly, result in a consistent Instagram feed with a clear brand message.<sup>547</sup> Finally, for brands with a well-established, loyal fan base, a *user-generated content* strategy may be the most effective means of engaging with their audience. This particular strategy works best for brands who already have enough loyal fans and customers, and rely upon said users themselves to create content which is then posted on the platform. Successful examples of companies who depend on this strategy include the watchmaker, Daniel Wellington.<sup>548</sup> After defining which type of Instagram strategy to utilise, one must consider the essential components of an Instagram strategy, which are defined below and are elaborated further in Cooper:

*Content scheduling*: due to the fact that Instagram's feed is not chronological in nature, and instead based on engagement and interaction, brands need to be strategic in when they post and how often.<sup>549</sup> Consistent, on-going posting schedules heightens visibility and increases opportunities for engagement. Therefore, it is better

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<sup>542</sup> Scissons, M., Vo, J., & Sim, H. (2015), Instagram Marketing Strategy. E-Book. Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

<sup>543</sup> Pacis, C. 2017. How to create a winning Instagram strategy. Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019. <https://blog.wishpond.com/post/115675437360/instagram-marketing-strategy>

<sup>544</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>545</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>546</sup> Pacis, C. 2017. How to create a winning Instagram strategy. Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019. <https://blog.wishpond.com/post/115675437360/instagram-marketing-strategy>

<sup>547</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>548</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>549</sup> Cooper, P. 2018. How to Schedule Instagram Posts. Accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2018. <https://blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-schedule-instagram-posts/>

to post every week for three days, than to post one week every day and the next week nothing.<sup>550</sup> An understanding of what the audience expects is essential to devising a successful posting schedule.

*High-quality images:* in order to maintain the integrity of the account and retain the attention of followers, images must be of a high-quality, ideally shot by a professional photographers, with due attention paid to the composition, lighting, and styling of the image.<sup>551</sup> It should come as no surprise that Instagram accounts which are visually cohesive, either in their use of imagery, colour palettes, or theme, have gained widespread popularity, as they focus almost entirely on the developing of a holistic story world.<sup>552</sup> Post-production photo editing tools are essential here.

*Content creation:* with the addition of the stories feature in 2018, users have even more opportunities to create attractive, compelling content with which to engage with their followers.<sup>553</sup> This new feature has proven itself to be incredibly fruitful in increasing engagement because the stories feature is located at the top of the user's feed, booting its visibility, and placing the story in a position of prominence. For brands, Instagram Live is a superb tool for demonstrating a new product, speaking directly to consumers, establishing brand identity, and connecting directly with an audience.<sup>554</sup>

*Hashtags:* an extremely effective tool on Instagram, hashtags, allow users to find the content you post, in addition to aiding brands to situate themselves within a particular niche in the market. Hashtags also function to raise levels of exposure and the engagement.

*Optimisation for monetisation:* while there are a handful of ways to monetise Instagram, one of the most efficient means by which to do so is the use of Call to Action Strategies (CTAs), which direct the consumer to where they can purchase the product featured in the post.<sup>555</sup> Additionally, the AIDA marketing formula - attention, interest, desire, and action - can be used to capture the attention of a potential buyer and compel he or she to take action and purchase the product.<sup>556</sup> This can be successfully achieved by encouraging consumers to make purchase decisions, such as by offering discount codes or short-duration sales.

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<sup>550</sup> Pacis, C. 2017. How to create a winning Instagram strategy. Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019. <https://blog.wishpond.com/post/115675437360/instagram-marketing-strategy>

<sup>551</sup> Sharma, G. 2018. 4 Quick and Easy Tips for Posting High Quality Images on Instagram. Social media today. Accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2019. <https://www.socialmediatoday.com/news/4-quick-and-easy-tips-for-posting-high-quality-images-on-instagram/526603/>

<sup>552</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>553</sup> Khan, M. 2018. How to Create a Mind-Blowing Instagram Video Strategy. Accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2018. <https://www.jeffbullas.com/create-mind-blowing-instagram-video-strategy/>

<sup>554</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>555</sup> Laurence, C. (2017), Call to Action on Instagram: 13 Creative CTAS to Test on Your Account. Accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 2019. <https://www.planthat.com/call-to-action-instagram/>

<sup>556</sup> Miles, J., G. (2014), Instagram Power: Build your brand and reach more customers with the power of pictures. United State of America, p.32.

*Contests*: competition has proven itself to be a highly constructive tool on many channels, and Instagram is no exception. Indeed, Instagram accounts that offer contests for their followers to participate in have an average growth rate that is 70% faster than those who do not.<sup>557</sup> Contests which help to generate sales and gather contact information from participants garner the most benefits for brands.

*Advertisements*: ads are, simply put, the best way to reach your target audience.<sup>558</sup> Strategic consideration of which images are most effectual in displaying and sharing product information can lead to a powerful call to action, by combining targeted copy and compelling imagery.<sup>559</sup> Ads on Instagram take on four different forms: photo ads, video ads, carousel ads, and story ads. Whichever type of ad is chosen, it must be done in careful consideration of the target audience, which is achieved by identifying niches in the market and creating targeted ads for those particular consumers.

*Storytelling*: as addressed more thoroughly in the preceding sections, stories are one of the most powerful tools of human communication and Instagram is an ideal platform from which to tell stories. Using the framework of visual storytelling, brands can create compelling, authentic content that engages with their audience. It is crucial, however, that brands do not just tell stories, but craft interweaving narratives that shape a cohesive vision of the brand's identity and image.<sup>560</sup>

*Right audience*: as Rohrs has noted, it is consumers prerogative to choose which ads, by which brands, they want to devote their attention to; it is the individual user who decides who to follow, which posts to like, stories to view, and posts to comment on.<sup>561</sup> Therefore, we can say that consumer attention must be earned on Instagram. Therefore, brands have to be conscious of their desired audience and pay careful attention to producing and posting content that appeals to said audience. In addition, the social behaviour of brands, in essence how and who they interact with on the platform, need also be considered and targeted, with possible prospects in mind, as opposed to random interactions.<sup>562</sup> A strategy of intentional interactions leads to better brand engagement, which is crucial to the success of any marketing campaign on the application. products actually work.

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<sup>557</sup> Patel, N. 2017. 7 Instagram marketing mistakes to avoid at all costs. Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019. <https://neilpatel.com/blog/7-instagram-marketing-mistakes-to-avoid-at-all-costs/>

<sup>558</sup> Pacis, C. (2017), How to create a winning Instagram strategy. Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> April 2019. <https://blog.wishpond.com/post/115675437360/instagram-marketing-strategy>

<sup>559</sup> Miles, J., G. 2014. Instagram Power: Build your brand and reach more customers with the power of pictures. United States of America, p.44.

<sup>560</sup> Pearce, K. (2017), 15 Brilliant examples of visual storytelling on Instagram. Accessed 5<sup>th</sup> April 2019, <https://www.diygenius.com/brilliant-examples-of-visual-storytelling-on-instagram/>

<sup>561</sup> Rohrs, J., 2013. Audience: Marketing in the Age of Subscribers, Fans, Followers. Wiley Publishing, 1<sup>st</sup> edition.

<sup>562</sup> Miles, J., G. 2014. Instagram Power: Build your brand and reach more customers with the power of pictures. United States of America.

*Collaborations and influencer marketing*: the importance of collaboration, especially with related brands and influencers, cannot be overstated. By means of definition, influencers can be said to be “individuals within a consumer’s social graph, whose commentary, based on the personal nature of their relationship and communications, has a direct impact on the behavior of that consumer.”<sup>563</sup> These individuals hold sway over niche markets, which are invaluable resources for any brand attempting to reach a target audience. For this reason, it is essential for brands to identify those influencers who can best reach a predetermined target audience.<sup>564</sup> As Barker has identified, there are six distinct categories of influencer collaboration: sponsored social media content, gifting, sponsored blog posts, guest blogging, take-overs, and brand ambassador programs.<sup>565</sup> Each variety of collaboration has its own advantages and disadvantages, and thus, must be weighed to determine the best strategy to achieve follower brand engagement. However, it can be broadly stated that influencer content is more effective than the brand’s original content in many contexts.<sup>566</sup>

As we have seen, Instagram is a powerful marketing tool, which, when used correctly, has the power to increase brand visibility, increase brand engagement, and shape relationships between consumers and brands; however, like any other medium, the platform has its pitfalls for marketers and should not be considered a land of milk and honey. Some common errors that are committed by marketers on Instagram result from the simple lack of planning from the outset.<sup>567</sup> As Patel notes, without a clearly-defined, results oriented strategy, the majority of marketing campaigns on Instagram can and do fail.<sup>568</sup> These failures in strategic planning can be as small as neglecting to include a link to the product being advertised in the post,<sup>569</sup> or as significant as failing to adequately engage with followers in the brand’s communication on the platform.<sup>570</sup> These two mistakes, along with a lack of consistency in theme, relevance, image, tone, scheduling, and interaction with followers, form the basis of the better part of errors made by marketers in their attempts to exploit the platform.

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<sup>563</sup> Brown, D., Fiorella, S. 2013. *Influence Marketing*. E-book. Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

<sup>564</sup> Quan, S. (2017), *Working with influencer: Dos and Don’ts*. Ninja Outreach. Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2019. <https://ninjaoutreach.com/influencer-collaboration-examples/>

<sup>565</sup> Barker, S. (2018), *6 of the Most Effective Types of Influencer Collaborations*. Accessed 12<sup>th</sup> of April 2019, <https://shanebarker.com/blog/effective-types-influencer-collaborations/>

<sup>566</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>567</sup> Patel, N. (2017), *7 Instagram marketing mistakes to avoid at all costs*. Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019. <https://neilpatel.com/blog/7-instagram-marketing-mistakes-to-avoid-at-all-costs/>

<sup>568</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>569</sup> Hart, K. (2017), *11 Instagram mistakes to avoid at all costs*. Accessed 17<sup>th</sup> April 2018, <https://curatti.com/11-instagram-mistakes-avoid/>

<sup>570</sup> *Ibidem*.

## Conclusion

**“Instagram doesn’t exist in a vacuum. We're not a bunch of siloed individuals. It's a bunch of people coming together on topics, fashion, you know, youthful teens, creatives, photographers, foodies, everyone coming together and building a community around the things they love, communicating visually.” - Kevin Systrom<sup>571</sup>**

With the growth social media, and the rise of storytelling on as a means of brand communication, the phenomenon of visual information exchanges has become of significant interest to scholars and marketers alike.<sup>572</sup> However, previous narratological studies, especially those on narrative transportation theory, have tended to consider only textual or otherwise verbal narratives, as opposed to examining visual communication. However, as noted in the preceding section on Visual Storytelling, the mental stimulation which occurs when presented images is very different from the stimulation caused by verbal communication, as it engaged with the viewer’s psychological mechanisms. Nevertheless, the insights into immersion,<sup>573</sup> narrative transportation, verbal and non-verbal forms communication in brand advertising,<sup>574</sup> which have been widely studied in the literature of marketing communication prove valuable to this emerging field of study. Applying these insights, and guided by the principle that visual mediums, such as Instagram, offer ingress into an individual’s hidden thoughts and unconscious emotions,<sup>575</sup> it is understood that visual communication, in the form of advertisements, induces a state of mental simulation from which a deeper understanding of consumers’ feelings and experiences can be reached.<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>571</sup> Kevin Systrom Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/kevin\\_systrom\\_752143](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/kevin_systrom_752143)

<sup>572</sup> Clasen, A. (2015). Why Instagram is so important to Millennials. Available at: <http://blog.iconosquare.com/instagram-important-millennials/>

<sup>573</sup> Megere C.M., Woodside A.G. (2010), Creating visual narrative art for decoding stories that consumers and brands tell, *Psychology and Marketing*,27, p.603-22.

<sup>574</sup> Bruselle R., Bilandzic H. (2008), Fictionality and perceived realism in experiencing stories:A model of narrative comprehension and engagement, *Communication Theory*, 18, p.255-280.

<sup>575</sup> Escalas, E. (2004). Narrative processing: Building consumer connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14, p.168-180.

<sup>576</sup> Heejin L., Childs M. (2016), Brand Storytelling on Instagram: How Do Pictures Travel to Millennial Consumers' Minds?, University of Tennessee.

Human Branding

*“There is an universal tendency among mankind to conceive all beings like themselves... We find human faces in the moon, armies in the clouds.”*

- David Hume

**3.1 Human Branding: An Introduction**

Once declared a dead field of marketing, branding, and more specifically, *human branding*, has not only survived, but thrived in the dynamic world of Web 2.0, where visual storytelling is essential and audiences hunger for compelling, authentic storytelling. However, despite the continued growth of branding as a practice, there exists a considerable gap between application and theory in the field. Roundly dismissed as being “regimented diet of canned optimism and connect-the-dot formulas” sold to “naive customers” by “experts [that] range somewhere between corny and culty,”<sup>577</sup> the literature on personal branding reflects the disdain which has traditionally colour academic analyses of the field. From criticism on the basis of moral grounds, to the objection that personal branding is the apex of unfettered commercialism,<sup>578</sup> there exists a clear tendency to treat human branding as a process by which “complex human beings” are reduced to “something like Kleenex.”<sup>579</sup> Moreover, attempts to gain self-exposure<sup>580</sup> through human branding have been dismissed a preferencing of image over substance.<sup>581</sup> Indeed, the final product of this form of branding, the branded self or the *human-brand* as it were, has been described as “one of the more cynical products” of the tertiary, post-Fordism economy.<sup>582</sup>

How then to reconcile this fundamentally critical, moralistic attitude to personal branding which exists in the literature, with the seemingly positive gains achieved in the field in recent memory? A facile approach would be to summarily dismiss human branding as a nothing but a harried attempt by marketers to create employment opportunities for themselves at a point in time when a stagnant world economy, undergoing restructuring, has rendered the industry subject to volatile change.<sup>583</sup> However, the success which has been seen by countless influencers and celebrities alike, individuals who have transformed themselves into brands in and of their own right, is much more difficult to dismiss. Rather, the concept of personal branding, dismissing any

<sup>577</sup> Conley, L. (2008), OBD: Obsessive Branding Disorder. Philadelphia, PA, Public Affairs.

<sup>578</sup> Klein, N. (2008). Threats and Temps. Critical Social Issues in American Education: Democracy and Meaning in a Globalizing World. H. S. Shapiro and D. E. Purpel. Mahwah, NJ, Taylor & Francis e-Library: 365-390.

<sup>579</sup> Conley, L. (2008), OBD: Obsessive Branding Disorder. Philadelphia, PA, Public Affairs.

<sup>580</sup> Rosen, J. (2004). The Naked Crowd: Reclaiming Security and Freedom in an Anxious Age New York, Amazon Kindle Edition.

<sup>581</sup> Lair, D. J., K. Sullivan, et al. (2005), Marketization and the Recasting of the Professional Self: The Rhetoric and Ethics of Personal Branding, Management Communication Quarterly 18(3), pp. 307-343.

<sup>582</sup> Hearn, A. (2008), ‘Meat, Mask, Burden’: Probing the contours of the branded ‘self’, Journal of Consumer Culture 8(2), pp. 197-217

<sup>583</sup> Zarkada A. (2018), Concepts and constructs for personal branding: An exploratory literature review approach, Athens University of Economics and Business & Hellenic Open University

negative connotations the term may entail, can be described as the creation of a *human brand* by any well-known person, whose name, image, or likeness is used in marketing efforts, as defined by Thomson.<sup>584</sup> Within this conceptualisation of human branding, individuals which have become brands - celebrities for the most part, though increasingly the ranks of celebrity also include so-called influencers - have typically been of interest to marketers as endorsers.<sup>585</sup> However, as has been noted, *brand status* is only achieved through the mass mediatisation and consumption of their identities and personalities as commodities.<sup>586</sup> This process, whether it involved athletes, film and television personalities, musicians, entrepreneurs, or even politicians, recognises the commercial value of celebrity, and can be seen as the culmination of orchestrated brand experiences.<sup>587</sup>

As will be further discussed in Chapter Three, the concept of human branding, as facilitated by visual and verbal storytelling, has had an immeasurable impact on marketing as it occurs online, especially on social media networks. Traditional marketing has been turned on its head and the fundamental elements which compose the creation of a *brand*, including its image and identity in the eyes of consumers, have been inexorably altered by the introduction of *personal branding*, as seen in the storytelling engaged in by influencers and celebrities respectively, to the world of marketing.

### 3.1.1 Human Branding Defined

“The essence of a thing is what it is said to be in respect of itself.”

- Aristotle<sup>588</sup>

A definition, which describes an object's attributes which compose its essential nature as elucidated by Aristotle,<sup>589</sup> is perhaps the clearest and most intuitive way in which to grasp the conceptual foundation and theoretical grounding of a term as nebulous and ill-defined as *human branding*. The definition of human branding predominantly found in the popular literature relies upon a haphazard mix of psychotherapy-based personal development tactics as applied to management, as is seen in the following quote taken from the human branding “guru” Aruda,

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<sup>584</sup> Thomson, M. (2006), Human Brands: Investigating Antecedents to Consumers' Strong Attachments to Celebrities, *Journal of Marketing*, 70 (3), pp. 104–119.

<sup>585</sup> Keel, A., & Natarajan, R. (2012), Celebrity endorsements and beyond: New avenues for celebrity branding, *Psychology & Marketing*, 29, pp. 690–703.

<sup>586</sup> Pringle, H. (2004), *Celebrity sells*, Wiley, London.

<sup>587</sup> Yohn, D. L. (2014, July 16). Lady Gaga is still schooling marketers. *Forbes.com*. Retrieved 12 May 2019, from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/deniselyohn/2014/07/16/lady-gaga-is-still-schooling-marketers/>.

<sup>588</sup> Cohen, S. Marc, "Aristotle's Metaphysics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/>.

<sup>589</sup> Aristotle (2007), *Posterior Analytics*. Adelaide, South Australia, The University of Adelaide Library.

*[human branding is] understanding what is truly unique about you (...) and using that to differentiate yourself and guide your career decisions. Through unearthing the true you and consistently and constantly living your personal brand, you attract what you need to achieve your goals without having to 'wrestle with the universe' to acquire it.*<sup>590</sup>

Within such a conceptual framework, the purpose of human branding is to unearth a quasi-mythical sort of uniqueness,<sup>591</sup> which is then communicated with the world, enabling individuals as human brands to “conquer” the arena of his or her choice - in this case, Instagram. This concept is in many ways not dissimilar from *υστεροφημία*, or posthumous fame,<sup>592</sup> which was first elucidated in Ancient Greece. In manifold ways, the creation of a personal brand, such as those formulated by Chiara Ferragni and Kim Kardashian West amongst others, “is how you live in the hearts and minds of those in your market.”<sup>593</sup>

For a more conceptually and structurally rigorous definition of personal branding we look to Hearn’s definition of human branding, and the individual who has become a brand for that matter, as being a “product, producer, and consumer (...) captive to and conditioned by the controlling interests of global flexible capital.”<sup>594</sup> In addition, the notion that personal branding is centered on the transference of value from brand to consumer by means of emotional connection is essential to any well-developed definition of the concept.<sup>595</sup> Departing from the impression that personal branding is an “arcane activity”<sup>596</sup> that is a mere “programmatic approach”<sup>597</sup> and arriving at the conviction that it is a proactive response,<sup>598</sup> which is, at its most effective, a “powerful tool,” human branding is a process which should not be underestimated or ignored by marketers.

However, it would be mistaken to assume that the contention surrounding the concept of human branding is a modern one. Rather, the debate over corporate anthropomorphism, in essence, the transformation of a brand into a humanistic entity, has its roots in the early seventeenth century.<sup>599</sup> While there are meaningful differences between corporate-human equivalence and the application of corporate branding theory in tandem with personal branding mechanisms, there are also significant commonalities between the two.<sup>600</sup> Inasmuch, in

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<sup>590</sup> Aruda, W. (2010), Personal Branding Guru William Aruda.

<sup>591</sup> Schawbel, D. (2009), *Me 2.0.*, Kaplan, New York.

<sup>592</sup> Zarkada A. (2018), Concepts and constructs for personal branding: An exploratory literature review approach, Athens University of Economics and Business & Hellenic Open University.

<sup>593</sup> Hodgkinson, S. (2005), *The Leader's Edge: Using Personal Branding to Drive Performance and Profit.* Lincoln, NE, iUniverse.

<sup>594</sup> Hearn, A. (2008), *Meat, Mask, Burden` : Probing the contours of the branded `self`*, *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8(2), pp.197-217.

<sup>595</sup> Thomas, S. (2007), *Career Smart: Five Steps to a Powerful Personal Brand.* Chandler, AZ, Career Coaching 360.

<sup>596</sup> Shepherd, I. D. H. (2005), *From Cattle and Coke to Charlie: Meeting the Challenge of Self Marketing and Personal Branding*, *Journal of Marketing Management* 21(5/6), pp.589-606.

<sup>597</sup> Montoya, P. and T. Vandehey (2002), *The Personal Branding Phenomenon: realize greater influence, explosive income growth and rapid career advancement by applying the branding techniques of Oprah, Martha and Michael.* Beaverton, OR, Personal Branding Press Publishing.

<sup>598</sup> Hughes, A. (2007). *Personal Brands: An Exploratory Analysis of Personal Brands in Australian Political Marketing.* Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy (ANZMAC) Conference 2007, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, Department of Marketing, School of Business, University of Otago.

<sup>599</sup> Kusku, F. and A. Zarkada-Fraser (2004), *An empirical investigation of corporate citizenship practices in Australia and Turkey*, *British Journal of Management* 15(1), pp.57-72.

<sup>600</sup> Zarkada A. (2018), Concepts and constructs for personal branding: An exploratory literature review approach, Athens University of Economics and Business & Hellenic Open University

our shared socioeconomic system just as an individual can produce goods and services to be sold in exchange, so too can a corporation.<sup>601</sup> Moreover, beyond the goods and services produced by an individual, he or she may also possess values and intrinsic qualities, beyond those typically valued in the context of production, that become visible and relevant beyond the confines of the goods and services on offer.<sup>602</sup> As a final point of commonality, both individuals and corporations are in possession of distinct histories, identities, and reputations which form the basis on both personal and corporate branding.<sup>603</sup>

Thus, human branding, like its corporate branding counterpart, can be defined as a the conscious, strategic decision to communicate defined aspects of a brand or individual's identity, by means of a predetermined branding proposition, with the aim of differentiating the brand and/or individual from competitors, thereby strengthening positive perceptions held by stakeholders and networks alike.<sup>604</sup> In the faltering world economy, which is facing increasing competition from foreign markets, human branding provides an opportunity for marketers to expand the target market for their skills and talents, in one of the most dynamic and rapidly developing fields in the industry. The epistemological boundaries of marketing defined by Kotler and Levy<sup>605</sup> should be discarded as relics of the heyday of the Mad Men, and, instead, a cross-fertilisation of marketing with other disciplines is necessary to formulate a set of techniques and processes by which identities are shaped and communication is facilitated, resulting in the creation of human brands.<sup>606</sup>

### 3.1.2 Personal Branding and the Creation of Human Brands

**“Millennials want brands with a story, something they can relate to. They want a personal brand they can put a face to.”**  
- **Bobby Berk**<sup>607</sup>

In a network economy, innovation, the formation of strong relationships, collaboration, and knowledge are essential to gaining a competitive advantage,<sup>608</sup> and in contemporary processes of market coordination, network members “are the essence of a consciously configured network of value.”<sup>609</sup> Social media networks, moreover, must be understood to be a crucial component of the modern networked environment and the contributions

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<sup>601</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>602</sup> Zarkada A. (2018), Concepts and constructs for personal branding: An exploratory literature review approach, Athens University of Economics and Business & Hellenic Open University

<sup>603</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>604</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>605</sup> Kotler, P. and S. J. Levy (1969), Broadening the concept of marketing, *Journal of Marketing* (January), pp. 10-15.

<sup>606</sup> Zarkada A. (2018), Concepts and constructs for personal branding: An exploratory literature review approach, Athens University of Economics and Business & Hellenic Open University

<sup>607</sup> Bobby Berk Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/bobby\\_berk\\_934922](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/bobby_berk_934922)

<sup>608</sup> Mazurek, G. (2014), Network value creation through marketing. *Management and Business Administration. Central Europe*, 22, pp. 70–77.

<sup>609</sup> Kucharska, W., Confente, I. (2017), Selfie and personal branding phenomena in the context of the network economy, A literature review, *Handel Wewnętrzny*, 6(371), pp. 161-169.

which they confer to overall network value recognised.<sup>610</sup> As has been addressed more thoroughly in Chapter Two, social media, or social networking sites, serve as platforms through which users to create, interpret, and share content,<sup>611</sup> and may range from blogs, social networking sites, collaborative projects, content communities, virtual social worlds, virtual game worlds, to Internet forums, with varying levels of engagement on each platform.<sup>612</sup> While there are many intriguing consequences to this creation of virtual networks on social media, for the purposes of this thesis, it is the development of personal brands which is of greatest interest.

A rapidly growing trend, online personal branding can be seen to be a natural culmination of an era of consumer-to-consumer driven information,<sup>613</sup> which has allowed some users of social media to consciously fashion their own personal brands.<sup>614</sup> Self-presentation has been noted to be a primary motivation for the use of social media<sup>615</sup> as social media networks function as ideal platforms from which to express individual values, personal beliefs, and interests, in addition to socially defining one's image and identity.<sup>616</sup> It is these very factors - the self-discovery of individual values, beliefs, interests, image, and identity - which are the foundations of building a successful personal brand strategy<sup>617</sup> and maintaining a positive brand reputation.<sup>618</sup> As has been noted, "the process of personal branding is peculiar, introspective and requires a high level of self-awareness. Formulating a good strategy will not take only time but also a lot of personal effort."<sup>619</sup> However, human, or otherwise personified brands, who make this effort are likely to reap significant benefits from humanising themselves in the eyes of consumers, as the literature suggests.

That social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram provide their users with an ideal stage upon which to present one's self should come as no surprise.<sup>620</sup> Indeed, the platforms seems explicitly designed for self-presentation as they confer upon users the ability to display themselves in ever more curated and desirable fashion through the use of image enhancing filters and software.<sup>621</sup> More to this point, it has been argued that

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<sup>610</sup> Mazurek, G. (2014), Network value creation through marketing. *Management and Business Administration. Central Europe*, 22, pp. 70–77.

<sup>611</sup> Kaplan, A., Haenlein, M. (2009), Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), pp. 59-68

<sup>612</sup> Kucharska, W., Confente, I. (2017), Selfie and personal branding phenomena in the context of the network economy, A literature review, *Handel Wewnętrzny*, 6(371), pp. 161-169.

<sup>613</sup> Karaduman, İ. (2013), The effect of social media on personal branding efforts of top level executives, *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 99, pp. 465–473

<sup>614</sup> Kucharska, W., Confente, I. (2017), Selfie and personal branding phenomena in the context of the network economy, A literature review, *Handel Wewnętrzny*, 6(371), pp. 161-169.

<sup>615</sup> Seidman, G. (2013). Self-presentation and belonging on Facebook: How personality influences social media use and motivations. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 54, 402–407

<sup>616</sup> Orehek, E., & Human, L. J. (2017), Self-expression on social media: Do tweets present accurate and positive portraits of impulsivity, self-esteem, and attachment style? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 43, pp. 60–70.

<sup>617</sup> Poeppelman, T., Blacksmith, N. (2014), Personal branding via social media: Increasing SIOP visibility one member at a time, "The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist", Vol. 51, No. 3, pp.112-119.

<sup>618</sup> Philbrick J.L., Cleveland A.D. (2015), Personal branding: building your pathway to professional success, "Medical reference services quarterly", Vol. 34, No. 2., p.181- 189.

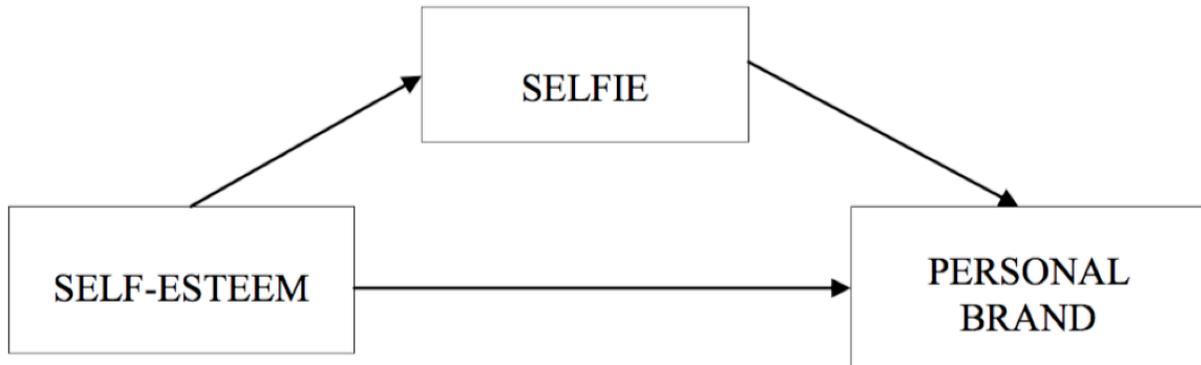
<sup>619</sup> Kucharska, W., Confente, I. (2017), Selfie and personal branding phenomena in the context of the network economy, A literature review, *Handel Wewnętrzny*, 6(371), pp. 161-169.

<sup>620</sup> Zhao S., Grasmuck S., Martin J. (2008), Identity construction on Facebook: digital empowerment in anchored relationships. "Computer and Human Behavior", Vol. 24, No. 5.

<sup>621</sup> Ibidem.

posting and editing photos by users on platforms such as Instagram often leads to engagement in self-promoting and superficial behaviours that would not otherwise be present.<sup>622</sup> These behaviours can be interpreted as resulting from the combined effect of social media consumption and the desire to produce content which will be deemed valuable by fellow users.<sup>623</sup> This transformation from passive consumption to active participation and the creation of content is an essential step in the process of the creation of a digital self, or *persona*, which is requisite for the production of human brands.<sup>624</sup> Inasmuch, the fabrication of content, including selfies, for a digital market can be understood as being an action of self-extension and personal branding.<sup>625</sup> Moreover, users who engage in personal branding on social media find themselves in good company as digital self-branding has transformed into rapidly growing business in its own right within recent users.<sup>626</sup>

**Figure 25. *Selfie and Personal Brand Framework* - Eagar et al. (2016)**



<sup>622</sup> McCain J. L., Borg Z. G., Rothenberg A. H., Churillo K. M., Weiler P., & Campbell W. K. (2016), Personality and selfies: Narcissism and the Dark Triad. "Computers in Human Behavior", No. 64.

<sup>623</sup> Pounders K., C. M., Kowalczyk C. M., & Stowers K. (2016), Insight into the motivation of selfie postings: impression management and self-esteem. "European Journal of Marketing", Vol. 50, No. 9/10.

<sup>624</sup> Kucharska, W., Confente, I. (2017), Selfie and personal branding phenomena in the context of the network economy, A literature review, *Handel Wewnętrzny*, 6(371), pp. 161-169.

<sup>625</sup> Ozansoy Çadırcı T., & Sağkaya Güngör A. (2016), Love my selfie: selfies in managing impressions on social networks. "Journal of Marketing Communications", pp.1-20

<sup>626</sup> Chen C.P. (2013), Exploring personal branding on YouTube, *Journal of Internet Commerce*, Vol.12, No. 4.

### 3.1.3 Congruence and the Appeal of Human Branding

**“A personal brand is relevant to people who sell or create something relevant to who they are as a person.”  
- Tucker Max<sup>627</sup>**

If humans can become brands, and brands can become human for that matter, what then is the relationship between humans and brands? Fournier’s seminal 1998 study on consumer brand relationships is posited on the concept that some form of interaction exists between the personalities of the two entities, cementing the notion that there is indeed a relationship formed between individuals and brands.<sup>628</sup> This connection, which Aaker has suggested, is grounded in the concept that “personality traits associated with a brand can influence consumer attitudes through their relationship to the malleable self-concept”<sup>629</sup> Moreover, in further research on the topic, it has been noted that self-brand connection, in which consumers incorporate brands into their own self-concepts, has been proven to affect adult,<sup>630</sup> adolescent, and child consumers<sup>631</sup> alike. Indeed, it appears as if by means of a relationship with a brand, individuals may both foster an emotional attachment to a given brand, and, in addition, incorporate said brand’s identity into her or her own sense of self identity.<sup>632</sup>

Brand personality, as defined as a set of human characteristics and personality traits associated with a given brand,<sup>633</sup> is a cornerstone in the development of emotional attachment between consumers and brand and, as has been proposed by Freling, Crosno, and Henard, is measurable in terms of three distinct dimensions which lead to favorable attitudes and purchase intentions.<sup>634</sup> These dimensions are as follows:

*Favourability*: the positive perception of a brand’s traits and personality, in regards to the benefits conferred to the consumer.<sup>635</sup> The concept of favourability is also applicable to human brands, as the extent to which consumers hold favourable impressions of a celebrity’s personality or character traits has a direct impact on their ability to experience beneficial connections, which are the foundation of the creation of a positive relationship between brands and consumers.<sup>636</sup>

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<sup>627</sup> Tucker Max Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/tucker\\_max\\_568286](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/tucker_max_568286)

<sup>628</sup> Fournier, S., (1998), Consumers and their brands: developing relationship theory in consumer research, *Journal of Consumer Research Inc.*, Vol. 24.

<sup>629</sup> Aaker, J. L., Dimensions of brand personality, *Jmr, Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. XXXIV, ABI/INFORM Global, 1997, pp. 347-356.

<sup>630</sup> Escalas, J. E. (2004), Narrative processing: Building consumer connections to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14, 168–180.

<sup>631</sup> Chaplin, L.N., and D. Roedder John, (2005), The Development of Self Brand Connections in Children and Adolescents. *Journal of Consumer Research* 32, no. 1, pp. 119–129.

<sup>632</sup> Park, C.W., D.J. MacInnis, J. Priester, A.B. Eisingerich, and D. Iacobucci(2010), Brand Attachment and Brand Attitude Strength: Conceptual and Empirical Differentiation of Two Critical Brand Equity Drivers, *Journal of Marketing* 74, no. 6, pp. 1–17.

<sup>633</sup> Aaker, J. L.,(1997), Dimensions of brand personality, *Jmr, Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. XXXIV, ABI/INFORM Global, pp. 347-356.

<sup>634</sup> Freling, T. H., Crosno, J. L. & Henard, D. H. (2011), Brand personality appeal: conceptualization and empirical validation, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 39 (3), pp. 392–406.

<sup>635</sup> Keller E., Berry, J., (2003), *The Influentials*, Free Press.

<sup>636</sup> Loro P.S., Braig B.M. (2015), Consumer Attachments to Human Brands: The “Oprah Effect”, *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 32(7), pp. 751–763

*Originality*: the perception that a given brand's personality is somehow novel, or otherwise distinctive, differentiating a brand from its competitors in the field.<sup>637</sup> Original brands, with easily distinguishable attributes, naturally have a competitive advantage and are significantly less likely to suffer from interference effects.<sup>638</sup> In the case of human brands, originality, unsurprisingly, similarly confers value to the brand, as consumers are instinctively drawn to distinctiveness.<sup>639</sup>

*Clarity*: the third and final dimension of favourable brand personality, refers to the "apparent and recognisable" aspects of brand personality in the eyes of consumers.<sup>640</sup> In essence, brand personalities ought to be clearly defined and memorable, with an obvious impact on consumer evaluations of the brand.<sup>641</sup> Human brand personalities, along the same tack, are most effective when they are clearly elaborated and lead to the development of brand attitudes, from which consumers may then "form (or forego) solid attachments."<sup>642</sup>

These three dimensions of brand personality work in tandem to create easily recognisable brand identities, which then form the basis of consumer perception of brand image. Furthermore, when a brand's image appears to similar to that of a consumers, congruence occurs, in which individual consumers see something of him or herself in the brand's own personality. This sense of connection is essential to the creation of ties which bind the consumers to brands as a process of image building.

The effects of congruence, linking brand communication to self-image, is so powerful that consumers' attitudes towards advertisements and brands, more generally, are shaped by feelings of shared identity and recognition.<sup>643</sup> If indeed perceptions of brand identity are congruent to individual users' personalities, they may act as effective agents of influence.<sup>644</sup> This concept has been further supported by the work of Jagre, Watson, and Watson, who have argued that *congruence*, the perception that a brand's image, personality, and communication aligns with consumers' self-image, is the a compelling force in the shaping of consumers' attitudes and brand perception.<sup>645</sup> This connection, between self-identity and brand image, is based on a belief in congruence between the two parties, and has been shown to result in a higher level of emotional brand

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<sup>637</sup> Freling, T. H., Crosno, J. L. & Henard, D. H. (2011), Brand personality appeal: conceptualization and empirical validation, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 39 (3), pp. 392–406.

<sup>638</sup> Keller E., Berry, J., (2003), *The Influentials*, Free Press.

<sup>639</sup> Loro P.S., Braig B.M. (2015), Consumer Attachments to Human Brands: The "Oprah Effect", *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 32(7), pp. 751–763

<sup>640</sup> Freling, T. H., Crosno, J. L. & Henard, D. H. (2011), Brand personality appeal: conceptualization and empirical validation, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 39 (3), pp. 392–406.

<sup>641</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>642</sup> Loro P.S., Braig B.M. (2015), Consumer Attachments to Human Brands: The "Oprah Effect", *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 32(7), pp. 751–763

<sup>643</sup> Lee, J., J. Kim, and J. Yu. (2015) Effects of Congruence of Product, Visual Image, and Consumer Self-Image on Art Infusion Advertising. *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal* 43, no. 10: 1728.

<sup>644</sup> Moon, Y. 2002. Personalization and Personality: Some Effects of Customizing Message Style Based on Consumer Personality. *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 12, no. 4: 313–326.

<sup>645</sup> Jagre, E., J.J. Watson, and J.G. Watson. 2001. Sponsorship and Congruity Theory: A Theoretical Framework for Explaining Consumer Attitude and Recall or Event Sponsorship. *Advances in Consumer Research* 28, no. 1: pp. 439-445.

attachment than would otherwise be present.<sup>646</sup> Brand attachment and congruence, it should be noted, is shaped by manifold factors including the projection of individual traits by consumers onto preferred brands,<sup>647</sup> adding an additional layer of difficulty for those attempting to engage in brand communications on social media.

Further complicating matters is the fact that unlike other channels of communication, social media, and the brand communication which takes place there, is often undertaken by a single individual, or small team, who are tasked with interacting with followers, not as salespeople or representatives of the brand, but as the brand itself.<sup>648</sup> This aspect of brand communication on social media further blurs the division between *brands-as-objects* and *brands-as-entities*. Therefore, as Malär et al. have noted, on social media a distinctive brand voice often develops, embodying a recognisable personality, which is present in interactions with consumers, or followers, online.<sup>649</sup> Inasmuch, brand advertising managers, in their creation and management of social media content, are engaged in the creation and exhibition of brand identity, and subsequent personality, as a means of connecting with current and prospective followers of the brand.<sup>650</sup>

Social media networks, such as Instagram with its staggering one billion active users in 2018-2019, and 500 million daily users,<sup>651</sup> hold enormous sway over the communication and brand engagement habits of a significant proportion of consumers, reinforcing the need for the development of solid consumer brand relationships. With 70% of users investigating brands on Instagram,<sup>652</sup> an additional 80% of Instagram's users following at least one brand's account,<sup>653</sup> and a further 75% of which taking action at some point, such as visiting the brand's website or brick and mortar location after viewing posts made by the brand,<sup>654</sup> the importance of the creation of attachment to human brands cannot be understated.

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<sup>646</sup> Joseph T. Yun, Utku Pamuksuz, Brittany R.L. Duff (2019), Are we who we follow? Computationally analyzing human personality and brand following on Twitter, *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, USA*

Malär, L., H. Krohmer, W.D. Hoyer, and B. Nyffenegger. 2011. Emotional Brand Attachment and Brand Personality: The Relative Importance of the Actual and the Ideal Self. *Journal of Marketing* 75, no. July, pp. 35–52.

<sup>647</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>648</sup> Joseph T. Yun, Utku Pamuksuz, Brittany R.L. Duff (2019), Are we who we follow? Computationally analyzing human personality and brand following on Twitter, *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, USA*

<sup>649</sup> Malär, L., H. Krohmer, W.D. Hoyer, and B. Nyffenegger. 2011. Emotional Brand Attachment and Brand Personality: The Relative Importance of the Actual and the Ideal Self. *Journal of Marketing* 75, no. July, pp. 35–52.

<sup>650</sup> Solis B. & Webber A.,(2012), “The rise of Digital Influence”, Altimeter Group,

<sup>651</sup> The Statistical Portal, Number of monthly active Instagram users from January 2013 to June 2018 (in millions), accessed on 29 april 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/253577/number-of-monthly-active-instagram-users/>

<sup>652</sup> Iconosquare (2017), Instagram 2015 Study – Unleash the Power of Instagram, accessed on 29 april 2019, <https://blog.iconosquare.com/instagram-2015-study-unleash-power-instagram/>

<sup>653</sup> Instagram Official WebSite, accessed 25 March 2019, <https://business.instagram.com/>

<sup>654</sup> Leonard, L. (2017), How Instagram is changing the design industry, Accessed 28th April 2019. <https://www.bdcnetwork.com/blog/how-instagram-changing-design-industry>

### 3.1.4 Brand Attachment: When Brands Become Loved Ones

**“The problem often is that aspiring brands wish to be universally loved. Unfortunately, universal love is neither achievable nor desirable. Instead, great brands are loved by some and hated by others because they actually stand for something.”**  
-Nirmalya Kumar<sup>655</sup>

Attachment, which was first theorised by John Bowlby as being a “lasting psychological connectedness between human beings”<sup>656</sup> has been subsequently extended to include human brands as relationships in which the bonds of attachment are formed through relationships springing from “the intensity of a person’s target-specific emotional bond with a human brand.”<sup>657</sup> As regards this thesis, three proposed antecedents of consumers’ attachments to human brands, as seen in influencers and celebrities, can be identified: *autonomy, relatedness, and competence*, henceforth known as ARC.<sup>658</sup> These three antecedents are representative of essential human needs, which when met in relationships, are the foundation of the creation of intense attachments.<sup>659</sup> ARC needs, as are defined below, entail:

*Autonomy*: refers to a sense of agency and openness of choice in regards to one’s behavior and expression. Human brands must foster a sense of freedom in the consumer to development strong attachment.<sup>660</sup>

*Relatedness*: refers to the sense of closeness or interconnectedness which comes from a sense of belonging to a group.<sup>661</sup> When human brands nurture a sense of “connected with and cared for by another”<sup>662</sup> with consumers strong attachment bonds are formed.

*Competence*: refers to the consumer’s need for a sense of competence in regards to the universal value of achievement,<sup>663</sup> resulting in a heightened sense of capability, influence, and success.<sup>664</sup>

It should be noted, however, that while consumers’ relationship to a human brand may fulfill their ARC needs, the strength of the attachment is mitigated by a variety of factors, including the brand’s image, personality, and likability.<sup>665</sup> Indeed, there must be a requisite level of initial attraction between human brand and consumer for a

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<sup>655</sup> Nirmalya Kumar Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/nirmalya\\_kumar\\_633964](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/nirmalya_kumar_633964)

<sup>656</sup> Bowlby, J., 1979. *The Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds*, Tavistock, London, p. 194

<sup>657</sup> Thomson, Patricia. “Chapter 4 – Field.” *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, edited by Michael Grenfell, Acumen Publishing Limited, 2008, pp. 67-81

<sup>658</sup> Loroz P.S., Braig B.M. (2015), *Consumer Attachments to Human Brands: The “Oprah Effect”*, *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 32(7), pp. 751–763

<sup>659</sup> La Guardia, J., Ryan, R. M., Couchman, C. E., Deci, E. L., (2000), *Within-Person Variation in Security of Attachment: A self-determination theory perspective on attachment, need fulfilment, and well-being*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79 (3), 367-384.

<sup>660</sup> Loroz P.S., Braig B.M. (2015), *Consumer Attachments to Human Brands: The “Oprah Effect”*, *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 32(7), pp. 751–763

<sup>661</sup> La Guardia, J., Ryan, R. M., Couchman, C. E., Deci, E. L., (2000), *Within-Person Variation in Security of Attachment: A self-determination theory perspective on attachment, need fulfilment, and well-being*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79 (3), 367-384.

<sup>662</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>663</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>664</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>665</sup> Loroz P.S., Braig B.M. (2015), *Consumer Attachments to Human Brands: The “Oprah Effect”*, *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 32(7), pp. 751–763

strong attachment is be formed in all likelihood.<sup>666</sup> However, when formed, strong attachments of this nature have the power to development into a sort of love affair between consumers and brands.

*Brand love*, which can be defined as an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards a brand which shapes consumers' perceptions, behaviour, and feelings, has been found to have a profound impact on a variety of brand-related concepts ranging from brand loyalty to word-of-mouth communication.<sup>667</sup> The yearning for, and attachment to, a brand has been duly acknowledged to be the foundation of the sort of relationship between consumer and brand which leads to the development of enduring ties and brand loyalty.<sup>668</sup> However, as Fournier notes, the ways in which consumers form, and later maintain, enduring relationships with brands is subject to manifold variations.

The first and most desirable of these variations can be termed, *brand love*, which is the most enduring and powerful type of relationship that is formed between consumers and brands. In this variation, identification with a brand is incorporated into a consumer's identity<sup>669</sup> to such an extent that he or she feels invested in the brand. Brands that foster strong, loving relationships with consumers are more likely to encourage feelings of brand loyalty, thus rendering themselves more competitive,<sup>670</sup> while increasing repatronage intentions.<sup>671</sup> In the case of human branding, consumers develop feelings of love for individuals as representatives of brands.

In addition, for brand love to develop, *brand personality*, or the endowing of human personality traits and characteristics to a brand,<sup>672</sup> is necessary to ensuring the formation consumer-brand relationships.<sup>673</sup> Within this scheme, brands can be interpreted as displaying traits such as sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness,<sup>674</sup> perceptions which are shaped by direct and indirect experience with a brand, human or otherwise.<sup>675</sup> Brand personality is typically conveyed through marketing communication strategies<sup>676</sup> and are essential to forming feelings of strong attachment, ideally resulting in purchase and consumption.<sup>677</sup>

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<sup>666</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>667</sup> 2nd Global Conference on Business and Social Science-2015, GCBSS-2015, 17-18 September 2015, Bali, Indonesia  
Effects of Brand Love, Personality and Image on Word of Mouth; the Case of Local Fashion Brands among Young Consumers.

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<sup>668</sup> Albert, Noel and D. Merunka, (2013), The role of brand love in consumer-brand relationships *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 30 Iss 3, pp. 258 – 266

<sup>669</sup> Carroll, Barbara A., and A.C. Ahuvia (2006), Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love *Marketing Letter*, 17, pp. 79-89.

<sup>670</sup> Yang J., (2012), Why the rise of Asia in fashion isn't as beautiful as it seems, *Wall Street Journal*.

<sup>671</sup> Vlachos, Pavlos A. and A.P. Vrechopoulos (2012) Consumer-retailer love and attachment: Antecedents and personality moderators *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 19, pp. 218-228

<sup>672</sup> Aaker, J. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(3), 347–356.

<sup>673</sup> Hankinson, G. (2004), The brand images of tourism destinations: a study of the saliency of organic images. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 13 (1), pp. 6-14.

<sup>674</sup> Aaker, J. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(3), 347–356.

<sup>675</sup> Seimiene, Eleonora and E. Kamarauskaite (2014) Effect of brand elements on brand personality perception *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 156 ( 2014 ) 429 – 434

<sup>676</sup> Park, Ji-Kyung and D.R. John (2012), Capitalizing on brand personalities in advertising: The influence of implicit self-theories on ad appeal effectiveness *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 22, pp. 424-432

<sup>677</sup> Orth, Ulrich, Y. Limon and G. Rose (2010) Store-evoked affect, personalities, and consumer emotional attachments to brands *Journal of Business*

When the brand is a human brand, the necessity to feel a connection between the personality of the brand/brand representative and consumer is heightened.

Moreover, *brand image*, how a brand's public image is conceptualised is crucial to differentiating a brand from its competitors<sup>678</sup> and is composed of brand associations stemming from "product attributes, the company, the marketing mix, the individual perceptions of the brand, personal values, experience, type of brand users and context variables."<sup>679</sup> Indeed, for consumers to develop a sense that a brand has its own unique image, they must first formulate a mental image of the brand, consisting of descriptive and evaluative knowledge about the brand.<sup>680</sup> When a brand's image becomes clear in the eyes of consumers, its messaging also takes on a heightened clarity and, thus, a stronger influence on consumer behaviour.<sup>681</sup> Human brands must be strategic in their development of a clear brand image to facilitate communication between groups.

Finally, *word-of-mouth*, or the sharing information and opinions between consumers about brands and their goods and services is essential to developing strong attachments between consumers and brands. This form of communication is not inherently commercial in nature, however, it is seen as a kind of voluntary service undertaken by consumers for good or for ill. This form of communication about brands has been identified as a key influencer in consumer decision-making,<sup>682</sup> and may have a greater impact than traditional forms of advertising alone.<sup>683</sup> Inasmuch, it is essential to foster positive experiences between human brands and consumers to fully develop feeling of love between parties.<sup>684</sup>

By fostering strong feelings of attachment, or even love, between consumers and brands, and human brands more specifically, marketers are better able to influence purchase intentions initially and maintain brand loyalty subsequently. Human brands, in particular, have a unique opportunity to speak directly to their audiences by communicating their own stories, shedding light on brand image, personality, and values along the way. Unlike other types of brands, which must consciously attempt to imbue their image with humanistic traits,

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Research 63 (2010) 1202–1208

<sup>678</sup> Aaker, J. (1997), Dimensions of brand personality, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(3), 347–356.

<sup>679</sup> Dobni, Dawn and G. Zinkhan (1990) "In Search of Brand Image: a Foundation Analysis", in *NA Advances in Consumer Research* Volume 17, eds. Marvin E. Goldberg, Gerald Gorn, and Richard W. Pollay, Provo, UT, Association for Consumer Research, Pp. 110-119

<sup>680</sup> Iversen, N. M., & Hem, L. E. (2008). Provenance associations as core values of place umbrella brands. *European Journal of Marketing*, 42, 5/6, pp. 603-626.

<sup>681</sup> Chen, J., G. Hsieh, J.U. Mahmud, and J. Nichols (2014), Understanding Individuals' Personal Values from Social Media Word Use. In *Proceedings of the 17th ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing - CSCW '14*, New York, New York, USA: ACM Press, pp. 405–414.

<sup>682</sup> Nguyen, Cathy and J. Romaniuk (2014) Pass it on: A framework for classifying the content of word of mouth *Australian Marketing Journal* Vol. 22, Issue 2, pp. 117-124

<sup>683</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>684</sup> 2nd Global Conference on Business and Social Science-2015, GCBSS-2015, 17-18 September 2015, Bali, Indonesia  
Effects of Brand Love, Personality and Image on Word of Mouth; the Case of Local Fashion Brands among Young Consumers.  
Adilla Anggraeni<sup>a\*</sup>, Rachmanita<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>a, b</sup> *Binus Business School, Bina Nusantara University, Jalan Hang Lekir 1 No. 6, 10270, Jakarta, Indonesia*

human brands inherently possess these characteristics, making the formation of relationships a seemingly natural consequence of narrative based brand interaction.

### 3.1.5 Human Branding and Marketing

**“There's more pressure to be famous for being yourself than if you're being a character.”**

- **Kim Kardashian**<sup>685</sup>

The hunger for human brands in contemporary consumer culture shows no signs of slackening at any point in the coming future, rather there appears to be an increasingly insatiable desire for celebrity stories. Today, any influencer armed with his or her wits and a decent camera can become “famous for being famous” on platforms such as Instagram, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.4. Unlike corporate brands, which seek to mask themselves under “brand veneers,”<sup>686</sup> there is a perception that human brands are the authentic stories of actual, everyday people, with their own particular realities, who have been thrust into the limelight.<sup>687</sup> Likewise, human brands are not merely a smaller-scale variation of corporate brands; rather the fundamental human qualities of an individual are part and parcel of what makes human brands so compelling and so complex. How then do brands become human and how then may human brands be used to best effect? These questions, amongst others, are essential to understanding the burgeoning, multifaceted field of branding, because “after all, isn't the rise and fall of human brands material from which consumer culture's greatest fairytales are made?”<sup>688</sup>

### 3.2 The Anthropomorphisation of Brands: When Brands Seem Human

**“The soul never thinks without a picture.”**

- **Aristotle**<sup>689</sup>

Throughout human history, anthropomorphism has held sway over human perceptions, shaping and guiding our notions in a vast range of disciplines, from art to science, religion to philosophy, and myriad other arenas. Defined as “the process of attributing mind, intentions, effortful thinking, emotional states, consciousness, and

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<sup>685</sup> Kim Kardashian Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/kim\\_kardashian\\_462873](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/kim_kardashian_462873)

<sup>686</sup> Allport, W. G., (1961), *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

<sup>687</sup> Giana M. Eckhardt and Marius K. Luedicke (2018), *Consumer Culture Theory Conference 2018*, Special Session Proposal “Human Brand Dynamics”, Odense, Denmark

<sup>688</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>689</sup> Aristotle Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/aristotle\\_148503](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/aristotle_148503)

behaviors to nonhuman entities,<sup>690</sup> anthropomorphisation entails the activation of human schemas as applied to non-human, or otherwise inanimate, objects.<sup>691</sup> This naturally occurring process is triggered by anthropomorphic representations onto which human schemas are projected, as is seen when consumers come to view brands as being human-like entities.<sup>692</sup> In the world of marketing, for instance, it has been duly noted that consumers frequently view brands as embodiments of human characteristics,<sup>693</sup> with their own distinctive personalities. Moreover, as Fournier has argued, not only do humans imbue brands with human-like qualities, such as personality and identity, but they also often choose to form close relationships with brands, as was addressed in section 3.1.<sup>694</sup> This phenomenon, otherwise known as *anthropomorphisation*, evinces the notion that nonhuman stimuli, in this case brands, have the ability to influence the perceptions, behaviour, and emotions of consumers in a fashion similar to human stimuli.<sup>695</sup> One has only to look to the related phenomenon of *pareidolia*, which is, in essence, the seeing of faces in inanimate objects, to comprehend the value of visual stimulus for humans; “faces are easy to detect, preferentially attended, and hard to ignore”<sup>696</sup> so much so that we tend to see human-like faces, and traits, even where there are none.

Given the ease with which individuals are able to view inanimate objects as being animate, and brands as being human for that matter, it should come as no surprise that marketers have begun to turn to anthropomorphism as a marketing strategy. As a counterpart to personal branding, anthropomorphic branding as a marketing communication technique is on the rise in recent years as more and more firms seek to engage ever-savvier consumers on social media platforms such as Instagram.<sup>697</sup> As a marketing communication technique, anthropomorphisation has been proven to trigger positive consumer reactions by means of influencing consumers’ perceptions of pleasure and arousal stimulated by a brand, leading to positive attitudes of a brand’s persona.<sup>698</sup> In addition, anthropomorphisation can also lead to an increased sense of emotional connection between consumer and brand, which, may result in more favorable brand judgments.<sup>699</sup> Moreover, greater congruity between activated human-schema and consumers has an overwhelmingly positive impact on

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<sup>690</sup> Puzakova M.(2012),Brands as Humans: Positives and Negatives of Brand Anthropomorphism A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Drexel University.

<sup>691</sup> Landwehr, J. R., McGill, A. L., & Herrmann, A. (2011), It's got the look: The effects of friendly and aggressive "Facial" Expressions on product liking and sales, *Journal of Marketing*.

<sup>692</sup> Fournier, S.(1988), Consumers and their brands: developing relationship theory in consumer research, by *Journal of Consumer Research Inc.*, Vol. 24.

<sup>693</sup> Levy, S.J. (1985), Dreams, Fairy Tales, Animals, and Cars. *Psychology and Marketing*,pp.67–81.

<sup>694</sup> Fournier, S.,(1988),Consumers and their brands: developing relationship theory in consumer research, by *Journal of Consumer Research Inc.*, Vol. 24.

<sup>695</sup> Puzakova M.(2012),Brands as Humans: Positives and Negatives of Brand Anthropomorphism A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Drexel University.

<sup>696</sup> Takahashi, K., Watanabe K. (2015), Seeing Objects as Faces Enhances Object Detection.

<sup>697</sup> Vranica, S. (2012), Knights, pirates, trees flock to facebook: Mascots and other embodiments of corporations make a comeback in order to tweet and interact.

<sup>698</sup> Landwehr, J. R., McGill, A. L., & Herrmann, A. (2011), It's got the look: The effects of friendly and aggressive "Facial" Expressions on product liking and sales,*Journal of Marketing*.

<sup>699</sup> Delbaere, M., McQuarrie, E. F., & Phillips, B. J. (2011),Personification in advertising: Using a visual metaphor to trigger anthropomorphism, *Journal of Advertising* 40 (Spring), pp.121–130.

consumers' attitudes to a brand, product, or service.<sup>700</sup> However, despite the obvious benefits for marketers, there has been relatively little research undertaken in the field of marketing and consumer behavior literature by scholars.<sup>701</sup>

### 3.2.1 Consumer-Brand Relationships

**“You can totally work with brands. People love seeing that, but you have to build stories. You have to build credibility, and those brands have to really be the perfect fit for yourself.”**  
- Chiara Ferragni<sup>702</sup>

The concept that consumers may visualise brands as being somehow human, enabling consumers and brands to develop relationships, is often defined as being an extension of *consumer-brand relationships*,<sup>703</sup> which has been expounded upon in the literature in the past decade principally.<sup>704</sup> However, in recent memory, a burgeoning fascination has emerged in the field, focussing on the love that is felt for brands by consumers when strong attachments are formed. As addressed in Chapter 3.1, brand love is such a potent force that it is stronger than even brand satisfaction and brand liking in determining a range of post-consumption behaviours such as repurchase intentions, word-of-mouth communication, and, ultimately, brand loyalty.<sup>705</sup> Moreover, strong feelings of love towards a brand heightens consumers' willingness to pony up for premium prices,<sup>706</sup> an undoubtedly attractive proposition for any marketer.

How have we arrived at the point in which “I love you” could just as easily be uttered to an object as to a person? Put simply, as understood by consumers, brands exist in a category somewhere beyond those objects we traditionally think of as being inanimate and non-human; rather, due to the tendency towards anthropomorphisation, brands are just as often as not placed alongside humans, in much the same way as faces are seen in clouds.<sup>707</sup> As has been argued, anthropomorphism is a potent potential antecedent of brand love,<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>700</sup> Aggarwal, P. (2004), The effects of brand relationship norms on consumer attitudes and behavior, *Journal of Consumer Research* 31 (June), pp. 87-101.

<sup>701</sup> Puzakova M.(2012),Brands as Humans: Positives and Negatives of Brand Anthropomorphism A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Drexel University.

<sup>702</sup> Chiara Ferragni Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/chiara\\_ferragni\\_779518](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/chiara_ferragni_779518)

<sup>703</sup> Schouten, J. W., McAlexander, J. H., & Koenig, H. F. (2007),Transcendent customer experience and brand community, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 35 (3), pp.357-368.

<sup>704</sup> Sung, J.-Y., Guo, L., Grinter, R. E., & Christensen, H. I. (2007). "My roomba is rambo": Intimate home appliances. (Vol. 4717) Berlin: Springer/Heidelberg.

<sup>705</sup> Batra, R., Ahuvia, A. & Bagozzi, R. P. (2012), Brand love, american marketing association, *Journal of marketing*, Vol. 76.

<sup>706</sup> Thomson, M. (2006). Human Brands: Investigating Antecedents to Consumers' Strong Attachments to Celebrities. *Journal of Marketing*, 70 (3), pp.104-119.

<sup>707</sup> Waytz, A., Morewedge, C. K., Epley, N., Monteleone, G., Gao, J. H., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2010), Making sense by making sentient: effectance motivation increases anthropomorphism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 99(3), pp.410-435.

<sup>708</sup> Batra, R., Ahuvia, A., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2012). Brand love. *Journal of Marketing*, 76(2), pp.1-16.

which has a significant influence on passion-driven behaviours and positive emotional connection<sup>709</sup> such as is seen when consumers begin to identify with a brand to a degree in which the beloved object is transmuted and thereby transferred to the lover's identity.<sup>710</sup> This force has even greater potency when the object of consumers' affections is, in fact, an actual person, as opposed to an embodied brand. In such a scenario, as will be further address is Chapter 3.4 and 3.5, feelings of relatedness and identification are heightened equating to the building of impersonal interpersonal, strongly felt relationships. Indeed, there is strong evidence that self-brand integration is crucial to the formation of strong attachments resulting in brand love.<sup>711</sup>

This tendency to “imbue physical characteristics, behaviours, motivations, mental states, and emotions that are typical of human beings to objects, non-human agents,”<sup>712</sup> is rooted in the ability to make inferences, whether they be observable or not, as is seen in the personification of a brand's personality, intention, and motivations.<sup>713</sup> This phenomenon has been understood through the lens of two principal theoretical mechanisms: the tendency for individuals to evaluate brands as being within a *human category*, meaning brands are considered to be more similar to human beings than to inanimate objects;<sup>714</sup> and *cognitive consistency*, which postulates that the human mind prefers situations in which there is a coherence of beliefs and attitudes.<sup>715</sup> These two mechanisms work in tandem to create a sensation that brands and consumers operate within interpersonal relationships.<sup>716</sup> To summarise, when brands are perceived as possessing humanity,<sup>717</sup> or when brands *are* human as is the case in human brands, consumers naturally gravitate towards brands as plausible relationship partners,<sup>718</sup> which may ultimately result in feelings of brand love.

In accordance with theories of self-expansion, as defined by Aron and Aron, the motivation for entering into these sorts of relationships with brands stems from the need to incorporate the resources, perspectives, and identities of relationship partners into one's own self. In consumer-brand relationships, in particular, brands may be translated as symbols through which consumers reflect and define their own identities.<sup>719</sup> By integrating

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<sup>709</sup> Delgado-Ballester, E., Fernández-Sabiote, E. (2016), Once upon a brand: Storytelling practices by Spanish brands, *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, 20, 2, pp. 115-131.

<sup>710</sup> Bagozzi, R. P., & Dholakia, U. M. (2002). Intentional social action in virtual communities. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 16(2), 2–21.

<sup>711</sup> Delgado-Ballester, E., Fernández-Sabiote, E. (2016), Once upon a brand: Storytelling practices by Spanish brands, *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, 20, 2, pp. 115-131.

<sup>712</sup> Epley, N., Waytz, A., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2007), On seeing human: a three-factor theory of anthropomorphism. *Psychological Review*, 114(4), pp.864-886.

<sup>713</sup> Fournier, S., Alvarez C., (2013), Research dialogue. Relating badly to brands, Boston university school of management, 595 Commonwealth Ave. Society for consumer Psychology. Published by Elsevier Inc., Boston.

<sup>714</sup> Aggarwal, P., & McGill, A. L. (2007), Is that car smiling at me? Schema congruity as a basis for evaluating anthropomorphized products, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (December), pp.468–479.

<sup>715</sup> Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: a theory relating self and affect. *Psychological review*, 94(3), p.319.

<sup>716</sup> Delgado-Ballester, E., Fernández-Sabiote, E. (2016), Once upon a brand: Storytelling practices by Spanish brands, *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, 20, 2, pp. 115-131.

<sup>717</sup> Aggarwal, P., & McGill, A. L. (2007), Is that car smiling at me? Schema congruity as a basis for evaluating anthropomorphized products. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (December), pp. 468–479.

<sup>718</sup> Batra, Rajeev, A. Ahuvia, and R. P. Bagozzi (2012), Brand Love. *Journal of Marketing*: March 2012, Vol. 76, No. 2, pp. 1-16.

<sup>719</sup> Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139–168.

brands into consumers' conception of self, an aspirational or otherwise desired version of one's self emerges, further strengthening the bond between consumer and brand.<sup>720</sup> This process, it should be noted, is often dependent upon brand anthropomorphism as a means by which to foster integration, which is achieved through the dual mechanisms of *cognitive incorporation* and *investiture of social meanings*.<sup>721</sup> By way of definition, cognitive incorporation can be said to be a process of leaning, fantasising, or thinking about an object, such as a brand, so as to solidify its place of importance within one's self image.<sup>722</sup> Additionally, investiture of social meanings, that is the process by which meaning is socially defined and given authority, is essential to the development of one's self image and identity.<sup>723</sup> These mechanisms work in coordination to help shape self identity in a consumer context, integrating brand identity with self-identity.

However, while consumers do often integrate aspects of brand image and identity into their own self image, the extent to which this process occurs is moderated by elements of brand favourability; therefore, it is incumbent upon brands to nurture favourable consumers' attitude in order to achieve effective integration.<sup>724</sup> In addition, brands that are relatable and feel human, ideally human brands, are more easily integrated into self image.<sup>725</sup> Furthermore, for brand love to be achieved, said integration must be highly desired by consumers.<sup>726</sup>

### 3.2.1 Brand Loyalty and Brand Betrayal: The Many Faces of Personified Brands

**“Personal brand equity erodes much faster than corporate brand equity.”**

**- John Quelch<sup>727</sup>**

The consumer-brand connection, as previously stated, is reinforced and strengthened by brand favourability, and is an essential consideration in any attempt to maintain consumer loyalty and, subsequently, brand loyalty.<sup>728</sup> As has been noted in the preceding section, consumers who willingly enter into strong relationships with brands feel that they are themselves connected to the brand, and, as is such, may so too develop the complex sorts of emotions that one would feel in any sort of relationship.<sup>729</sup> These feelings, which may range from passionate

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<sup>720</sup> Escalas, Jennifer E. and J.R. Bettman (2005), Self-Construal, reference groups, and brand meaning. *Journal of Consumer Research* Vol. 32, December 2005, 378-389

<sup>721</sup> Carroll, Barbara A., and A.C. Ahuvia (2006), Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love *Marketing Letter*, 17, pp.79-89.

<sup>722</sup> Delgado-Ballester, E., Fernández-Sabiote, E. (2016), Once upon a brand: Storytelling practices by Spanish brands, *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, 20. 2, pp. 115-131.

<sup>723</sup> Belk, R. W. (1988), Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139-168.

<sup>724</sup> Fournier, S., (1988), Consumers and their brands: developing relationship theory in consumer research, by *Journal of Consumer Research Inc.*, Vol. 24.

<sup>725</sup> Aggarwal, P., & McGill, A. L. (2007) Is that car smiling at me? Schema congruity as a basis for evaluating anthropomorphized products. *Journal of Consumer Research*, pp. 468-479

<sup>726</sup> Carroll, Barbara A., and A.C. Ahuvia (2006), Some antecedents and outcomes of brand love *Marketing Letter*, 17, pp.79-89.

<sup>727</sup> John Quelch Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/john\\_quelch\\_757969](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/john_quelch_757969)

<sup>728</sup> Keller E., Berry J. (2015), *The Influentials. One American in Ten Tells the Other Nine How to Vote, Where to Eat, and What to Buy*”, Free Press.

<sup>729</sup> Park, C.W., D.J. MacInnis, J. Priester, A.B. Eisingerich, and D. Iacobucci (2010), Brand Attachment and Brand Attitude Strength: Conceptual and

love to keenly felt frustration, are a defining factor in the development of both positive and negative associations held by consumers about a given brand.<sup>730</sup> In such an emotionally fraught sort of relationship, therefore, perceptions of brand loyalty on one hand, and brand betrayal on the other have serious repercussions for firms, which are increasingly subject to the whims of consumers in a society which offers an ever growing range of choices in consumption contexts.

The concept of brand transgressions, in which consumers feel that a brand has somehow betrayed its values, can have dire consequences for firms.<sup>731</sup> A startling example of this phenomenon can be seen in the case of Apple, the American tech giant, whose value plummeted from \$146 billion USD to \$107 billion USD in early 2017, following consumer outcry against Apple<sup>732</sup> when it was shown that they had intentionally slowed down older iPhones. By engaging in practices perceived to be “deceptive, immoral and unethical”<sup>733</sup> by consumers, Apple was generally seen to have betrayed their relationship with users of their products.<sup>734</sup> The emotional component of consumer’s sense of betrayal is a fundamental consequence of brand anthropomorphism and, along with its counterpart *consumer forgiveness* for a brand transgression, provide key insights into the ways in which consumers manage brand relationships. As defined by Thomson, one of the vanguards in the field of human brands,<sup>735</sup> the antecedents of a strong brand relationship, autonomy and relatedness, along with a lack of “intense negative feelings or thoughts”<sup>736</sup> is requisite for the formation of a strong consumer-brand relationship.<sup>737</sup>

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Empirical Differentiation of Two Critical Brand Equity Drivers, *Journal of Marketing* 74, no. 6, pp.1–17.

<sup>730</sup> Shin, H., Casidy, R., Yoon, A., & Yoon, S. H. (2016), Brand trust and avoidance following brand crisis: A quasi-experiment on the effect of franchisor statements. *Journal of Brand Management*, 23(5), pp. 1-23.

<sup>731</sup> Ming Tan, T.(2018), Humanizing brands: The investigation of brand favorability, brand betrayal, temporal focus, and temporal distance, University of Oulu.

<sup>732</sup> Farber, M. (2017), Google tops Apple as the world’s most valuable brand. *Fortune*, last seen 15 May 2019, <http://fortune.com/2017/02/02/google-tops-apple-brand-value/>

<sup>733</sup> Hinton, R. (2017), Apple sued in Chicago for slowing down older iPhones. *Chicago Sun Times*.

<sup>734</sup> Ming Tan, T.(2018), Humanizing brands: The investigation of brand favorability, brand betrayal, temporal focus, and temporal distance, University of Oulu.

<sup>735</sup> Thomson, M. (2006). Human Brands: Investigating Antecedents to Consumers’ Strong Attachments to Celebrities. *Journal of Marketing*, 70 (3), pp.104–119.

<sup>736</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>737</sup> Ming Tan, T.(2018), Humanizing brands: The investigation of brand favorability, brand betrayal, temporal focus, and temporal distance, University of Oulu.

### 3.2.2 Building Brand Value Through Consumer Relationships

**“Obviously, as a marketer, I love to work with brands that aren’t static,  
that have life and personality.”  
- Bozoma Saint John<sup>738</sup>**

One of the primary motivations behind the building of consumer-brand relationships on the part of marketers and firms is the desire to generate brand value, an increasingly difficult proposition in the hyper-competitive environment which has arisen as an aftereffect of Web 2.0.<sup>739</sup> This paradigm-shifting aspect of the Internet as the predominant means of global communication, a phenomenon intensified by the widespread adoption of social media networks in the last ten years, has irrevocably altered the market environment by rendering it a network economy.<sup>740</sup> In an environment which is increasingly saturated with information - a staggering 2.5 quintillion bytes of data created each day at present count<sup>741</sup> - in today’s Internet of Things (IoT), the creation of unique content has taken on a heightened importance in the creation of value for brands.<sup>742</sup> Consequently, brand building by means of consumer engagement triggered by brand communication, as is seen in the posting of content on social media platforms such as Instagram, is a trend not to be ignored by researchers and marketing practitioners alike.<sup>743</sup>

This trend has been argued to be a by-product of the era of *consumer-to-consumer driven information* following the mass adoption of social media, which has resulted in a veritable golden age of personal branding.<sup>744</sup> Indeed, as Labrecque has implied, a significant portion of social media users actively engage in the creation of their own personal brands online.<sup>745</sup> This process draws upon mechanisms of self-expression and self-image to shape the personal identity and values which form the basis of any human brand.<sup>746</sup> Awareness of these two factors, along with the formulation of an *extended self*,<sup>747</sup> is essential to successful personal branding as “a narrative of the incorporated self.”<sup>748</sup> Indeed, it may even be argued that identity narratives are essentially

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<sup>738</sup> Bozoma Saint John Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/bozoma\\_saint\\_john\\_907433](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/bozoma_saint_john_907433)

<sup>739</sup> Bogner, W. C., & Barr, P. S. (2000), Making sense in hypercompetitive environments: A cognitive explanation for the persistence of high velocity competition. *Organization Science*, 11, pp.212–226.

<sup>740</sup> Castells, M. (2009), *Communication Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>741</sup> Marr, B. (2018), How Much Data Do We Create Every Day? The Mind-Blowing Stats Everyone, Forbes.

<sup>742</sup> Mazurek, G. (2014), Network value creation through marketing. *Management and Business Administration. Central Europe*, 22, 70–77.

<sup>743</sup> Köhler, C. F., Rohm, A. J., de Ruyter, K., & Wetzels, M. (2011), Return on interactivity: The impact of online agents on newcomer adjustment. *Journal of Marketing*, 75, pp. 93–108.

<sup>744</sup> Ming Tan, T. (2018), *Humanizing brands: The investigation of brand favorability, brand betrayal, temporal focus, and temporal distance*, University of Oulu.

<sup>745</sup> Labrecque, L. I., Markos, E., & Milne, G. R. (2011), Online personal branding: Processes, challenges, and implications. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 25, pp.37–50.

<sup>746</sup> Bearden, W. O., & Etzel, M. J. (1982). Reference group influence on product and brand purchase decisions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9, 183–194.

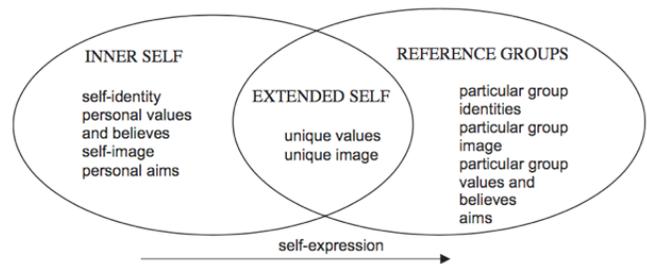
<sup>747</sup> Belk, R. W. (2013), Extended self in a digital world. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40, pp.477–500

<sup>748</sup> Vallas, S. P., & Cummins, E. R. (2015), Personal branding and identity norms in the popular business press: Enterprise culture in an age of precarity. *Organization Studies*, 36, pp.293–319.

the deployment of personal branding mechanisms in a professional context.<sup>749</sup> In the modern network economy, personal brands may be seen as the consequence of strategic self-marketing through which a human brand is formed.<sup>750</sup>

**Figure 26. Summary of findings on personal branding - (2017)**

Term	Definition
Brand	A name, term, sign, symbol, design, or combination of them, intended to identify goods or services of one seller or group of sellers to differentiate them from those of competitors
Branding	An act of creating a brand
Personal brand	A brand called YOU A particular real person name connected with all notions intended to identify this person and to differentiate from others
Personal branding	Managing an extended self Planned process in which people make efforts to market themselves Is the deployment of individuals' identity narratives for career and employment purposes
Personal brander	Professional advisor on how to create a personal brand



### 3.2.3 Personification and Performity

**“The collective unconscious consists of the sum of the instincts and their correlates, the archetypes. Just as everybody possesses instincts, so he also possesses a stock of archetypal images.”  
- Carl Jung<sup>751</sup>**

Any discussion of the anthropomorphisation of brands would be remiss not to include an examination of how the mechanisms of personification and performity are essential to the shaping of brand identity. Originally a term used to describe an actor’s mask, *persona* evokes many of the same connotations in its modern usage, which centre round concepts of identification and stereotypes.<sup>752</sup> As previously addressed in Chapter One, it was Carl Jung who first ascribed the concept of persona to that part of the personality which is responsible for the moderation of an individual's relationship with society, as defined by his or her conformity to socially

<sup>749</sup> Brooks, A. K., & Anumudu, C. (2016). Identity development in personal branding instruction social narratives and online brand management in a global economy. *Adult Learning*, 27, 23–29.

<sup>750</sup> Kucharska W. (2017), Consumer social network brand identification and personal branding. How do social network users choose among brand sites?, Cogent Business & Management.

<sup>751</sup> Carl Jung Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/carl\\_jung\\_717966](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/carl_jung_717966)

<sup>752</sup> Cherry, R. D. (1988), Ethos Versus Persona: Self-Representation in Written Discourse. *Written Communication*, 5(3), pp. 251–276.

recognised and condoned roles known as *archetypes*.<sup>753</sup> This notion, that a person may develop and then *perform* a persona in order to fulfill his or her archetypal role within society, has been crucial to the development to the concept of *persona-based marketing*.

In advertising, for instance, persona has been put forth as a logical explanation for the potency of anthropomorphic images and anthropomorphised brands.<sup>754</sup> As has been noted by Stern, companies cannot speak for themselves, and instead must make use of a persona, defined as fictive speakers of an often archetypal form, to speak on their behalf instead.<sup>755</sup> Indeed, “there is ample evidence of archetypal thought among consumers,”<sup>756</sup> wherein consumers construct elaborate *cultural-category structures*<sup>757</sup> through which brand communication is interpreted and consumer-brand relationships are navigated. It is through this process, known as intertextuality, that images, metaphors, and narratives become associated with other cultural objects and practices’, and, moreover, through which iconic figures, such as brands and celebrities or influencers in the form of human brands, become integrated in consumers self-image and understanding of the world.<sup>758</sup> Furthermore, it is through this process of *intertextuality*, as is seen in brand storytelling that brand personality and brand persona become interwoven with cultural archetypes, such as that of the hero, the trickster, or the mentor of Jung and Campbell’s narrative frameworks.<sup>759</sup>

It has been argued that corporate, or brand, persona meets three distinct needs for firms: to act as a surrogate or embodiment; to determine or moderate consumers’ expectations of the type and intensity of relationship one may expect; and to serve as the foundation through which attachment may be formed by consumers to brands.<sup>760</sup> It is through the creation of such a persona, as developed by marketing communications strategies, that brands are able to speak directly to consumers. This approach to market phenomena in human branding has also incorporated the notion of performativity to its conceptual roster in recent years.

Performativity can be said to entail the perlocutionary effects of practices,<sup>761</sup> which are, in effect, a representation of both a cultural script and the performance of said script, which is to say: managerial actions both represent a cultural template and the performance of said template.<sup>762</sup> In essence, performativity necessitates

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<sup>753</sup> Jung C.G. (1981), *The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious*, Collected Works of C.G. Jung Vol.9.

<sup>754</sup> Stern, B. B. (1988). Literary analysis of the company persona: A speaker schema. *Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 11(1), 3–20.

<sup>755</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>756</sup> Hirschman, E. C. (2000). Consumers’ use of intertextuality and archetypes. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 27, p. 60

<sup>757</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>758</sup> Dion, D., & Arnould, E. (2016), *Persona-fied brands: managing branded persons through persona*, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 32(1-2), pp. 121-148.

<sup>759</sup> Keller K. L., Apéria T., Georgson M. (2008), *Strategic brand management: a European perspective*, Pearson Education, Gosport.

<sup>760</sup> Herskovitz, S., & Crystal, M. (2010), *The essential brand persona: Storytelling and branding*. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 31(3), pp. 21-28.

<sup>761</sup> Tice, D. M., Butler, J. L., Muraven, M. B., & Stillwell, A. M. (1995), *When modesty prevails: Differential favorability of self-presentation to friends and strangers*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(6), pp.1120-1138.

<sup>762</sup> Mason, K., Kjellberg, H., & Hagberg, J. (2015). Exploring the performativity of marketing: Theories, practices and devices. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 31(1–2), 1–15.

there being both a cultural template and performance, the latter serving as a frame for the former.<sup>763</sup> In a consumption context, “a network of tools and stakeholders is also involved both as being acted upon and evaluating vis-à-vis the template and the adroitness of performance.”<sup>764</sup> In the case of human brand, the construction of a professional identity, or persona, can be seen as an act of performance given in reference to pre-existing cultural models, which act as a framing context for consumers.<sup>765</sup> Thus, market phenomena, such as the emergence of human brands in the form of influencers and Instagram celebrities, “exercise performative agency but are not ‘uttered’ by single subjects. Rather, they rely on networks of social relations, institutionalised practices and technological instruments for their perlocutionary effect.”<sup>766</sup> Therefore, the dual conceptualisations of persona and performativity are crucial to strategic marketing and an essential component of the effective management of a personified, or human, brand.<sup>767</sup>

### 3.3 Average Users of Instagram: A Demographic Analysis

**“Instagram is my edit of my life.”**

**- Kendall Jenner<sup>768</sup>**

Today, in the West, the average adult spends roughly 24 hours - an entire day - online each and every week.<sup>769</sup> This time spent engaged in communicating, gathering information, and entertaining ourselves on the Internet, while spread out on disparate sites, platforms, and applications, is largely concentrated on the main social media networks, on which the average adult spends 135 minutes per day; a figure which is continuously on the ascent.<sup>770</sup> In regards to how activity is spread across social media networks, the average adult user has a total of

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<sup>763</sup> Dion, D., & Arnould, E. (2016), Persona-fied brands: managing branded persons through persona, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 32(1-2), pp.121-148.

<sup>764</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>765</sup> Diedrich, A., Zetterquist, U. E., Ewertsson, L., Hagberg, J., Hallin, A., Lavén, F., . . . Walter, L. (2013). Exploring the performativity turn in management studies, GRI-rapport 2013:2. Gothenburg: Gothenburg Research Institute, School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg.

<sup>766</sup> Mason, K., Kjellberg, H., & Hagberg, J. (2015). Exploring the performativity of marketing: Theories, practices and devices. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 31(1-2), 1-15.

<sup>767</sup> Bode, M. (2010). Showing doing. The art-science debate in a performative perspective. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 9(2), 139-155.

<sup>768</sup> Jenner, K. (n.d.) Instagram is my edit of my life. Kendall Jenner

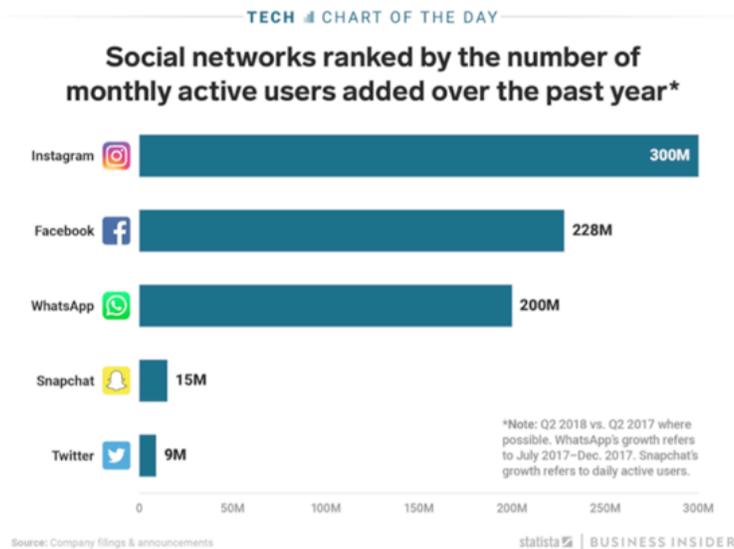
Read more at: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/kendall\\_jenner\\_743909](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/kendall_jenner_743909)

<sup>769</sup> A decade of smartphones: We now spend an entire day every week online, *The Telegraph*, Available on: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/08/01/decade-smartphones-now-spend-entire-day-every-week-online/> Accessed 29th April 2019.

<sup>770</sup> The Statistical Portal, Daily time spent on social networking by internet users worldwide from 2012 to 2017 (in minutes), accessed 29th April 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/433871/daily-social-media-usage-worldwide/>

7.6 accounts:<sup>771</sup> Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and WhatsApp accounting for the majority of social media activity, as is seen in the figure below.<sup>772</sup>

**Figure 27. Social Networks Ranked by the Number of Monthly Users Added Over the Past Year - Business Insider (2018)**



For the purposes of this thesis, however, we turn to Instagram, with its over 500 million active daily users,<sup>773</sup> to examine the ways in which average users of the platform post and consume content, engage with other users and brands alike, employ narrative and other mechanisms of storytelling, and create a virtual home for themselves on the application. Instagram, in a celebratory blog post after reaching 500 million users three short years ago,<sup>774</sup> stated about its users:

*As you've captured and shared the moments happening around you, you've formed incredibly varied and diverse communities. Whether you're an illustrator, a sneakerhead or an astronaut on the International Space Station, every photo and video you share helps bring people closer to friends and interests, broadens perspectives and inspires a sense of wonder. You've made Instagram a place where the everyday and the epic are always within reach.*<sup>775</sup>

<sup>771</sup> The Statistical Portal, Average number of social media accounts per internet user from 2013 to 2017, accessed 29th April 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/788084/number-of-social-media-accounts/>

<sup>772</sup> Soto Reyes, M. (2018) Social Networks Ranked by the Number of Monthly Users Added Over the Past Year. *Business Insider*. Accessed 29th April 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-grew-monthly-average-users-in-q1-2019-4?international=true&r=US&IR=T>

<sup>773</sup> The Statistical Portal, Instagram - Statistics & Facts, accessed 29th April 2019 <https://www.statista.com/topics/1882/instagram/>

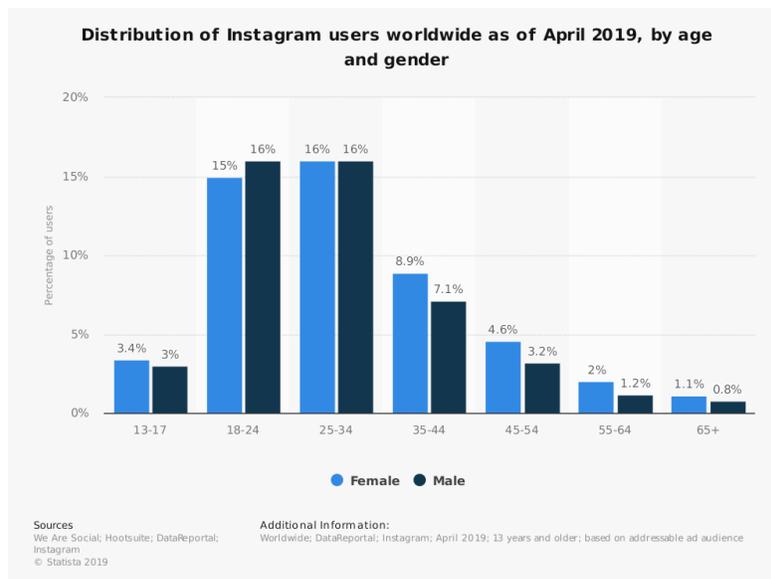
<sup>774</sup> Woollaston, V. (2016) Instagram Doubles to Half Billion Users. *Wired*, 21 June 2016. Accessed 29 April, 2019. <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/instagram-doubles-to-half-billion-users>

<sup>775</sup> Instagram (2016) Instagram Today: 500 Million Windows to the World. *Tumblr*, June 21, 2016. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://instagram.tumblr.com/post/146255204757/160621-news>

In such a community, where the everyday meets the epic, a billion users, most of them average individuals, gather to share and produce content online for a variety of reasons. From the lurkers who quietly populate the platform vast numbers,<sup>776</sup> some estimates ranging as high as 90% of all users,<sup>777</sup> to Instagram celebrities who may amass upwards of 100 million followers<sup>778</sup> and garner 10 million likes for a single post,<sup>779</sup> Instagrammers are varied to say the least, both in terms of engagement and roles played.

Globally, usage of Instagram, when analysed by age and gender, reveals the demographics the platforms inhabitants. Within the community, the majority of users skew young, as roughly three-quarters, or 71% of Instagram users worldwide, are under the age of 35. As is illustrated in the figure below, the vast majority of users fall within the *millennial* designation, a significant proportion being aged 18 to 34, which a sharp drop off in usage after age 35.

**Figure 28. Distribution of Instagram Users Worldwide as of April 2019 - Statista (2019)**



780

<sup>776</sup> Huang, Y. C., Wu, F., & Cheng, Y. (2016). Crisis communication in context: Cultural and political influences underpinning Chinese public relations practice. *Public Relations Review*, 42, 201–213.

<sup>777</sup> Fiorella, S. (2018) "Community Management: The 90-9-1 Rule is Dead," personal blog. Accessed 27 April 2019, <https://www.samfiorella.com/>

<sup>778</sup> Statista (2019) *The Most Followers on Instagram*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/421169/most-followers-instagram/>

<sup>779</sup> Joyce, E. (2019) The Twenty Most Liked Pictures on Instagram, *Brandwatch*. Accessed 26 April 2019, <https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/most-liked-pictures-on-instagram/>

<sup>780</sup> Statista (2019) *Distribution of Instagram Users Worldwide by Age and Gender*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/248769/age-distribution-of-worldwide-instagram-users/>

As is clearly visible from the bar chart above, Instagram attracts predominantly younger users, and, is especially popular amongst teenagers. Indeed, as of 2018, the application was ranked one of the popular social media networks by American teenagers, second only to Snapchat and eclipsing other major players in the field, such as Twitter and Facebook.<sup>781</sup> In regards to engagement, teens, and the millennial market more generally, tend to be among the most highly engaged of all social media audiences, with nearly half of all users reporting that they check one or more social media applications at least once per hour.<sup>782</sup> By way of comparison, in the general population 86% of social media users report checking one or more network every day, while a further 72% claim to use social media multiple times throughout the day.<sup>783</sup> This frequency is no doubt affected by the widespread adoption of mobile technology, as roughly half of social media users opt to access social media through mobile applications.<sup>784</sup> Indeed, approximately a quarter of all smartphone users worldwide are reported to log into the platform at least once a month.<sup>785</sup> However, this figure pales in comparison to statistics on daily usage of Instagram, which 38% of users report checking more than once a day.<sup>786</sup> This amounts to an average of 24 minutes per day for those aged 24 and older and more than 32 minutes a day for those aged younger than 24.<sup>787</sup>

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<sup>781</sup> Statistica (2019) . *Most popular social networks of teenagers in the United States from fall 2012 to spring 2019*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/250172/social-network-usage-of-us-teens-and-young-adults/>

<sup>782</sup> Statistica (2018) *Frequency of social media use among teenagers in the United States as of April 2018*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/945341/frequency-social-media-use-teenagers-usa/>

<sup>783</sup> Herhold, K. (2018) How People Use Social Media in 2018, *The Manifest*. Accessed 30 April 2019, <https://themanifest.com/social-media/how-people-use-social-media-2018>

<sup>784</sup> Herhold, K. (2018) How People Use Social Media in 2018, *The Manifest*. Accessed 30 April 2019, <https://themanifest.com/social-media/how-people-use-social-media-2018>

<sup>785</sup> Clark, D. (2017) Worldwide Instagram Users Continue to Grow, *EMarketer*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://newsroom.emarketer.com/newsroom/index.php/worldwide-instagram-users-continue-grow/>

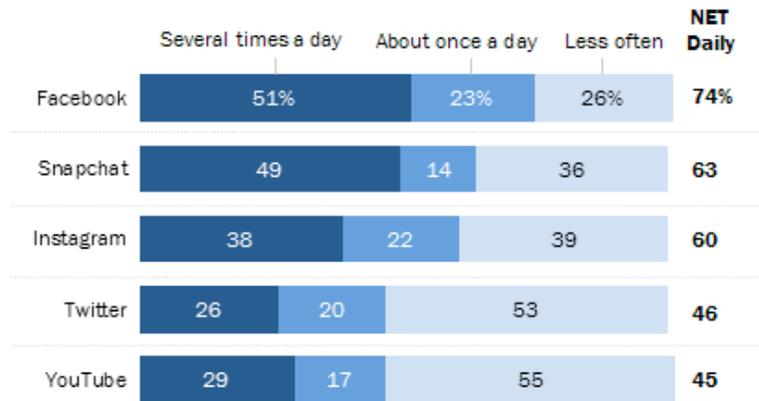
<sup>786</sup> Anderson, M., Smith, A. (2018) Social Media Use in 2018, *Pew Research Institute*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-in-2018/>

<sup>787</sup> Instagram Info Center (2017) Celebrating One Year of Instagram Stories, *Instagram Info Center*. Accessed 30 April 2019, <https://instagram-press.com/blog/2017/08/02/celebrating-one-year-of-instagram-stories/>

**Figure 29. A Majority of Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram Users Visit These Platforms on a Daily Basis - Pew Research Center (2018)**

**A majority of Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram users visit these platforms on a daily basis**

Among U.S. adults who say they use \_\_\_\_, the % who use each site ...



Note: Respondents who did not give answer are not shown. "Less often" category includes users who visit these sites a few times a week, every few weeks or less often.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018.

"Social Media Use in 2018"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

788

In addition, of these 700 million under-35 users, distribution by gender is seen to be virtually even, with minimal difference in rates of usage between male and female Instagrammers; however, when considered within the parameters of users of all ages, women tend to outnumber their male counterparts on the applications without exception.<sup>789</sup> This is in line with average gender distribution statistics across social media networks, with recent studies citing figures of three-fourths of women (75%) and 64% of men surveyed reporting using social media at least once per day.<sup>790</sup> Furthermore, research has indicated that women are significantly more likely to make use of mobile applications by which to access social media, with roughly half of all women stating a preference for mobile access; whereas a third of all men state a preference for computer-based sites.<sup>791</sup>

Turning to another key metric of user demographics on Instagram, average income, reveals a high percentage of community members with a significant amount of disposable income. In a comprehensive study undertaken by We are Flint in 2018 of 2,007 US adults and 2,008 UK adults, comparing rates of usage across 19

<sup>788</sup> Anderson, M., Smith, A. (2018) Social Media Use in 2018, *Pew Research Institute*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-in-2018/>

<sup>789</sup> Statista (2019) *Distribution of Instagram Users Worldwide by Age and Gender*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/248769/age-distribution-of-worldwide-instagram-users/>

<sup>790</sup> Herhold, K. (2018) How People Use Social Media in 2018, *The Manifest*. Accessed 30 April 2019, <https://themanifest.com/social-media/how-people-use-social-media-2018>

<sup>791</sup> Ibidem.

social media networks, including Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Foursquare, Giphy, Google+, Grindr, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Reddit, Skype, Snapchat, Tinder, Tumblr, Twitter, V Kontakte, WeChat, WhatsApp, and YouTube, Instagram was found to attract some of the wealthiest users of social media today. Of those surveyed, it was found that: of those who earn \$30,000 per year or under, 44% use Instagram; 45% of people who earn between \$30K–\$60K use Instagram; 36% of people who earn between \$60K–\$70K use Instagram; 55% of people who earn between \$70K–\$80K use Instagram; 46% of people who earn between \$80K–\$100K use Instagram; and, finally, a staggering 60% of people who earn between \$100K are Instagram community members.<sup>792</sup>

The high proportion of Instagram community members with disposable income is of especial importance due to the fact that Instagram holds an enormous sway over the communication and brand engagement habits of a significant proportion of consumers. Indeed, 70% of users report investigating brands on Instagram,<sup>793</sup> an additional 80% of Instagram's users follow at least one brand's account,<sup>794</sup> and a further 75% of which take action at some point, such as visiting the brand's website and brick and mortar location, after viewing posts made by the brand.<sup>795</sup> These statistics alone are sufficient to convey the power of Instagram as a marketing tool in today's world.<sup>796</sup> While it may be up for debate whether or not Instagram is really "the happiest place on the Internet,"<sup>797</sup> as some commentators have suggested, it is certainly one of the richest.<sup>798</sup> With an average of 95 million photos uploaded daily and an additional 4.2 billion subsequent likes, the current one billion strong Instagram community shows no signs of lagging in growth or in popularity anytime soon.<sup>799</sup>

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<sup>792</sup> We are FLINT (2018) *Social Media Demographics Main Findings 2018*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://weareflint.co.uk/main-findings-social-media-demographics-uk-usa-2018>

<sup>793</sup> Iconosquare (2017), Instagram 2015 Study – Unleash the Power of Instagram accessed on 29 April 2019, <https://blog.iconosquare.com/instagram-2015-study-unleash-power-instagram/>

<sup>794</sup> Instagram Official WebSite, accessed 25 March 2019, <https://business.instagram.com/>

<sup>795</sup> Leonard, L. 2017. How Instagram is changing the design industry. Accessed 28th April 2019. <https://www.bdcnetwork.com/blog/how-instagram-is-changing-design-industry>

<sup>796</sup> Moreau, E. 2018. What is Instagram, anyway? Accessed 15th of March 2019. <https://www.lifewire.com/what-is-instagram-3486316>

<sup>797</sup> Burke, A. (2016) Instagram is the Happiest Place in the (Internet) World. *Psychology Today*, 24 January 2016. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/paper-souls/201601/instagram-is-the-happiest-place-in-the-internet-world>

<sup>798</sup> Anderson, M., Smith, A. (2018) Social Media Use in 2018, *Pew Research Institute*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-in-2018/>

<sup>799</sup> Woollaston, V. (2016) Instagram Doubles to Half Billion Users. *Wired*, 21 June 2016. Accessed 29 April, 2019. <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/instagram-doubles-to-half-billion-users>

### 3.3.1 Drivers of Instagram Usage

“Instagram was created because there was no single place dedicated to giving your mobile photos a place to live and to be seen.”

- Kevin Systrom<sup>800</sup>

As social media is inherently collaborative, especially so in the case of *content communities* such as Instagram, users are obligated to interact with their fellow community members to take best advantage of the platform. Inasmuch, differences of personality which influence self-presentation and regulation, in addition to various psychological and socio-cultural factors, have a profound impact on the usage of social media.<sup>801</sup> In turn, participation in social media networks, in *content consumption* and *content production* contexts as defined by Mäntymäki and Islam, is shaped by the dual impulses of *voyeurism* and *exhibitionism*, respectively.<sup>802</sup> These facets of individual psychology will be examined in regards to their impact on the usage of Instagram by the majority of users.

As has been noted by Seidman, social media networks, such as Instagram, can be seen as platforms from which users form relationships, facilitate communication, and interact with one another, ideally in a fashion intended to promote the maintenance of social relationships.<sup>803</sup> Thus, the formation of strong attachments leading to the eventual development of relationships through the exhibition of positive behaviors, such as self-promotion<sup>804</sup> and self-disclosure,<sup>805</sup> may be understood to be desirable. Furthermore, those users who seek not to maintain or develop relationships within their chosen virtual community<sup>806</sup> can also be interpreted as engaging in a form of social surveillance or voyeurism<sup>807</sup> by which interpersonal, impersonal relationships are forged.<sup>808</sup> These two sides of the janus-faced usage of social media networks, such as the visual content community Instagram, fulfill users need to belong to a community in which support, companionship, and identity are conferred.<sup>809</sup>

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<sup>800</sup> Kevin Systrom Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/kevin\\_systrom\\_535919](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/kevin_systrom_535919)

<sup>801</sup> Griffiths, M. D., Kircaburun. (2018) Instagram addiction and the Big Five of personality: The mediating role of self-liking, *Journal of Behavioral Addictions* 7(1), pp. 158–170.

<sup>802</sup> Mäntymäki, M., & Islam, A. K. M. N. (2014). Voyeurism and exhibitionism as gratifications from presuming social networking sites. In *Proceeding of the 22nd European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS2014)*.

<sup>803</sup> Seidman, G. (2013). Self-presentation and belonging on Facebook: How personality influences social media use and motivations. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 54, 402–407.

<sup>804</sup> Belk, R. W. (2013). Extended self in a digital world. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40, 477–500.

<sup>805</sup> Hollenbaugh, W. E., & Ferris, A. L. (2014). Facebook self-disclosure: Examining the role of traits, social cohesion, and motives. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 30, 50–58.

<sup>806</sup> Marwick, A. E. (2012). The public domain: Social surveillance in everyday life. *Surveillance & Society*, 9, 378–393.

<sup>807</sup> Mäntymäki, M., & Islam, A. K. M. N. (2014). Voyeurism and exhibitionism as gratifications from presuming social networking sites. In *Proceeding of the 22nd European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS2014)*.

<sup>808</sup> Seidman, G. (2013). Self-presentation and belonging on Facebook: How personality influences social media use and motivations. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 54, 402–407.

<sup>809</sup> Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 497–529.

In addition to the benefits of community which such networks grant, diverse motivations stemming from the need for self-documentation, interaction, entertainment, distraction, and convenience, as identified by Kircaburun and Griffiths,<sup>810</sup> are present across all major social media platforms. In particular, it has been found that the desire to express oneself is especially present on Instagram, wherein users creation original content, or repost a highly curated selection of found content, in order to convey a desired tone, message, or self-image to fellow users and/or followers.<sup>811</sup> As Instagram is an ideal platform from which to produce and share images as a means of visual storytelling, it is little wonder that the application is especially well-suited for meeting needs of self-expression and self-presentation.<sup>812</sup> Second only to the desire for self-expression on Instagram is the need for entertainment and convenience, underscoring the rapid shift which has occurred on social media away from socialisation and social networking, and towards other, more complex motivations.<sup>813</sup> While it should be noted that network sizes appears to have little effect on user motivation and intensity of usage in the majority of cases,<sup>814</sup> Snapchat and Instagram are outliers to this phenomenon. Indeed, they are the sole platforms in which network size exhibits an appreciable effect on use intensity, owing in large part to the unique nature of self-promotion on Instagram, which encourages users to amass as many followers as possible on the platform, and its subsequent influence on user interactions.<sup>815</sup>

In addition to users' motivations and intensity of usage, factors such as personality are a key metric in understanding the ways in which Instagram is used by the majority of its community. As has been postulated by social scientists, Instagram usage may be further interpreted through the lens of a number of personality traits, including *neuroticism*,<sup>816</sup> *agreeableness*,<sup>817</sup> and *conscientiousness*, as outlined below.<sup>818</sup> In regards to neuroticism, users exhibiting neurotic behaviour are significantly more likely to be concerned with what others think or say about them and to engage in obsessive behaviour, such as the compulsive reading of comments and stalking of fellow users' profiles. Alternatively, individuals with a high degree of agreeableness, as is manifested in such behaviours as posting group photos, positive interactions with others, including commenting on or liking others' selfies, are also present in large numbers on Instagram influencers. By way of interpretation, it has been suggested that less agreeable users of Instagram are less likely to instigate interactions with other

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<sup>810</sup> Griffiths, M. D., Kircaburun. (2018) Instagram addiction and the Big Five of personality: The mediating role of self-liking, *Journal of Behavioral Addictions* 7(1), pp. 158–170.

<sup>811</sup> Hellberg, M. (2015), Visual Brand Communication on Instagram: A study on consumer engagement, Hanken School of Economics.

<sup>812</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>813</sup> Alhabash S., Ma M. (2017). A tale of four platforms: Motivations and uses of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat among college students? *Social Media + Society*, 3(1), 1–13.

<sup>814</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>815</sup> Griffiths, M. D., Kircaburun. (2018) Instagram addiction and the Big Five of personality: The mediating role of self-liking, *Journal of Behavioral Addictions* 7(1), pp. 158–170.

<sup>816</sup> Choi T. R., Sung Y., Lee J. A., Choi S. M. (2017). Get behind my selfies: The Big Five traits and social networking behaviors through selfies. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 109, 98–101.

<sup>817</sup> Kim J. W., Chock T. M. (2016). Personality traits and psychological motivations predicting selfie posting behaviors on social networking sites. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(5), 560–571.

<sup>818</sup> Choi T. R., Sung Y., Lee J. A., Choi S. M. (2017). Get behind my selfies: The Big Five traits and social networking behaviors through selfies. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 109, 98–101.

users or engage with content, let alone post their own content; whereas more agreeable members are more likely to be active participants on the platform.<sup>819</sup> Inasmuch, users with elevated traits of neuroticism and a low degree of agreeableness can be understood to make up the bulk of users on the platform, as upwards of 90% of all community members are predominantly passive users.<sup>820</sup> Based on this premise, there is little expectation that average users on Instagram will involve themselves in any meaningful way with other users or their content;<sup>821</sup> instead, the majority of individuals spend their time viewing influencer or celebrity's profiles, or focused on consuming content related to niche interests.<sup>822</sup> As a third factor to be examined is conscientiousness, which has a profound impact on peer relationships, reception of criticism, self-discipline, and self-liking.<sup>823</sup> As conscientiousness, and subsequent self-liking, are associated with elevated levels of comfort in social settings and better communication,<sup>824</sup> it can be extrapolated that conscientious users are more likely to interact with other members on the platform. Whereas individuals with lower self-liking are more likely to feel uncomfortable in social settings and to experience attachment issues.<sup>825</sup> These factors which shape user interaction, engagement, and content production and consumption on Instagram are fundamental to understanding how the platform is made use of by the majority of community members.

### 3.3.2 Brand Engagement in the Instagram Community

**“Facebook and Instagram are both really popular with teens, both in the U.S. and globally across the world. I think what you're starting to see is that there are all these different ways that people want to share and communicate.”**

- **Mark Zuckerberg**<sup>826</sup>

Turning to the interactions which occur between individual users and brands on Instagram, as the preeminent platform on which digital, visual, and personal storytelling occurs today, offers a number of key insights for marketers about how best to engage their audiences are revealed. As has been noted in Chapters One and Two, follower engagement, when done to best effect, is invaluable for brands, and with images on Instagram

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<sup>819</sup> Choi T. R., Sung Y., Lee J. A., Choi S. M. (2017). Get behind my selfies: The Big Five traits and social networking behaviors through selfies. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 109, 98–101.

<sup>820</sup> Abraham, C. (2015). Lurkers Are the 99.989% of Social Media. *Social Media Today*, 12 May 2014. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.socialmediatoday.com/content/lurkers-are-99989-social-media>

<sup>821</sup> Griffiths, M. D., Kircaburun. (2018) Instagram addiction and the Big Five of personality: The mediating role of self-liking, *Journal of Behavioral Addictions* 7(1), pp. 158–170.

<sup>822</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>823</sup> Tafarodi R. W., Swann W. B. (1995). Self-linking and self-competence as dimensions of global self-esteem: Initial validation of a measure. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 65(2), 322–342.

<sup>824</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>825</sup> Wilkinson R. B. (2010). Best friend attachment versus peer attachment in the prediction of adolescent psychological adjustment. *Journal of Adolescence*, 33(5), 709–717.

<sup>826</sup> Mark Zuckerberg Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/mark\\_zuckerberg\\_739591](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/mark_zuckerberg_739591)

garnering 23% more engagement than their Facebook counterparts,<sup>827</sup> Instagram is the ideal environment with which to engage with users in the increasingly fragmented world of social media.

As we have seen, Instagram is a powerful marketing tool, which, when used correctly, has the power to increase brand visibility, increase brand engagement, and shape relationships between consumers and brands. Indeed, consumers are using social networking sites in ever greater numbers to access information about brands. As of 2015, upwards of 70% of all users on Instagram report to have used the platform to gain information about a brand.<sup>828</sup> In addition, at present, 80% of Instagrammers follow at least one brand,<sup>829</sup> leading to heightened opportunities for brand engagement and the formation of consumer-brand relationships. An additional 60% of Instagrammers report using the platform as an information gathering tool about brands and their products and services on a regular basis.<sup>830</sup> It should come as no surprise then that countless brands have also made the migration to highly visual world of Instagram as an ideal environment in which to tell their stories to a target audience.<sup>831</sup>

On Instagram, two principal antecedents of interaction intentions have been identified, which are defined as *hedonism* and *satisfaction*. Hedonism refers to the emotional value of an experience,<sup>832</sup> whereas satisfaction can be seen as representing “the result of a global evaluation of all the aspects that exist in a relationship.”<sup>833</sup> Due to the primarily visual nature of the platform and the preference given for narrative as a means of communication, these factors can be seen as fundamental to interpreting user experience. In regards to brand engagement, hedonism, or the playful, self-gratifying aspects of the platform can lead to heightened brand community commitment and greater enjoyment of brand communication and interaction overall.<sup>834</sup>

For the vast majority of users on Instagram, these factors, as enumerated above, hold sway over their actions, perceptions, and consumption of content on the platform. However, there are those exceptional users, outliers who engage with the platform and their fellow users in inherently different ways. These users, so-called influencers and celebrities, have fundamentally different motivations for their participation on Instagram, and thus, engage with the platform and with fellow users in a unique fashion. It is these individuals to which we turn in the proceeding two sections of Chapter Three.

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<sup>827</sup> Business of Apps (2018) Instagram Revenue and Usage Statistics, <http://www.businessofapps.com/data/instagram-statistics/>

<sup>828</sup> Clasen, A. (2015) Instagram 2015 Study - Unleash the Power of Instagram, *Iconosquare Blog*, 21 January 2015. Accessed 20 April 2019, <https://blog.iconosquare.com/instagram-2015-study-unleash-power-instagram/>

<sup>829</sup> Instagram Business (2019) *Instagram Business*. Accessed 21 April 2019, <https://business.instagram.com/>

<sup>830</sup> Gollin, M. (2018) *5 Tips to Run Unstoppable Instagram Advertising Campaigns*, 29 August 2018. Accessed 22 April 2019, <https://www.falcon.io/insights-hub/topics/social-media-strategy/5-tips-instagram-advertising-campaigns/>

<sup>831</sup> Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2018) Understanding Consumer Interaction on Instagram: The Role of Satisfaction, Hedonism, and Content Characteristics. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* Vol. 20, No. 6 .

<sup>832</sup> Grappi S, Montanari F. (2011) The role of social identification and hedonism in affecting tourist re-patronizing behaviours: the case of an Italian festival. *Tourism Management* 2011; 32:1128–1140.

<sup>833</sup> Anderson EW, Sullivan MW. (1993) The antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction for firms. *Marketing Science* 1993; 12:125–143.

<sup>834</sup> Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2018) Understanding Consumer Interaction on Instagram: The Role of Satisfaction, Hedonism, and Content Characteristics. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* Vol. 20, No. 6 .

### 3.4 From Nobodies to Somebodies: Influencers on Instagram

“Influence is the new power - if you have influence, you can create a brand.”

- Michelle Phan<sup>835</sup>

One needs look at little more than the enormous amount of interest which the concept of *influencers* has generated in recent memory to understand the magnitude of the cultural force which these individuals represent. Once a relatively obscure term, the notion of influencers, referring to “a person with the ability to influence potential buyers of a product or service by promoting or recommending the items on social media, particularly when they do so in exchange for money or for samples of the product they are promoting,”<sup>836</sup> has seen a meteoric rise in adoption since the advent of social media. Indeed, the trend towards the use of influencers in marketing has led to a dramatic increase in the presence of the term in marketing circles and the general public alike. Much to this point, queries for the term itself have more than doubled in the years since 2012.<sup>837</sup> However, while modern iterations of the term in the marketing sense of *influencer* are undeniably recent, they belie its true age as the word can be traced to the 1660s.<sup>838</sup> In the more than three hundred years since its introduction into English, the term has developed a wide range of permutations, including indications of scale as is visible in the interconnected terms of: *micro-influencer*, *uber-influencer*, *super-influencer*, and *mega-influencer*.<sup>839</sup> It can be safely asserted that the notion of influencers is well-cemented in the minds and parlance of most individuals in the West at present, as is evidenced by the 325% increase in Google queries for the term in 2017.<sup>840</sup> This trend is only likely to intensify in future, as approximately two-thirds of marketing departments have stated they intend to devote more time and resources to bolstering their usage of influencer marketing, equating to an estimated increasing in marketing budgets of between \$25,000 USD and \$50,000 USD at present.<sup>841</sup> With a projected 4.95 million brand sponsored influencer posts in 2019<sup>842</sup> in a market valued at 1.5 billion USD,<sup>843</sup> the demand for influencers, and influencer generated content, on Instagram is only sure to grow in the coming future.

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<sup>835</sup> Michelle Phan Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/michelle\\_phan\\_743707](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/michelle_phan_743707)

<sup>836</sup> Oxford English Dictionary (2019) *The Increasing Influence of the Word Influencer*. Accessed 01 May 2019, <https://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2018/05/09/the-increasing-influence-of-the-word-influencer/>

<sup>837</sup> Oxford English Dictionary (2019) *The Increasing Influence of the Word Influencer*. Accessed 01 May 2019, <https://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2018/05/09/the-increasing-influence-of-the-word-influencer/>

<sup>838</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>839</sup> Ibidem.

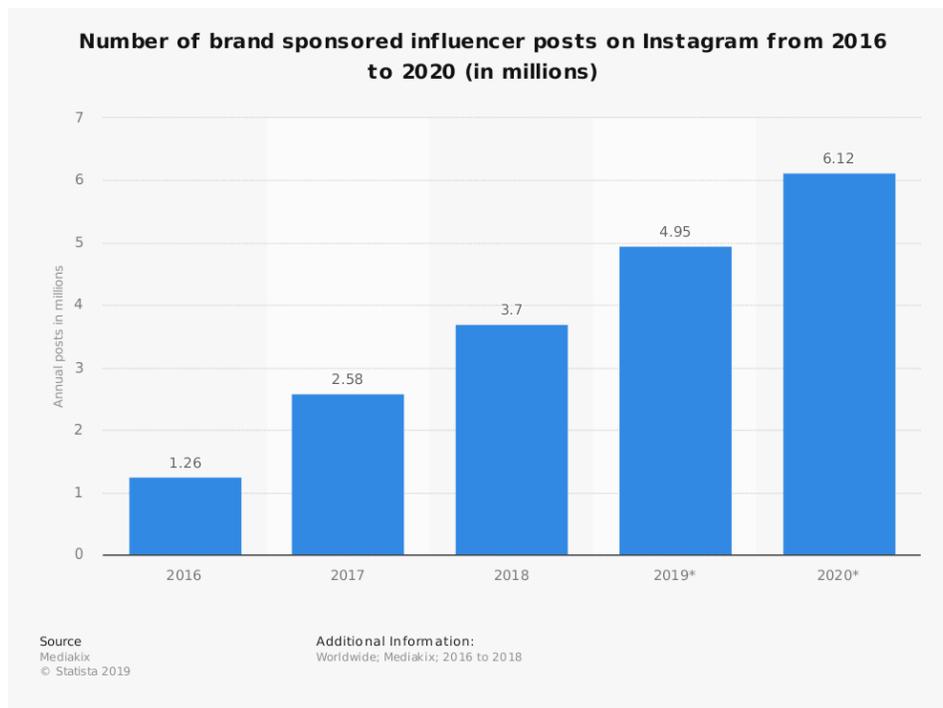
<sup>840</sup> Fastenau, J. (2018) Under the Influence: The Power of Social Media Influencers, *Medium*, 6 March 2018. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://medium.com/crobox/under-the-influence-the-power-of-social-media-influencers-5192571083c3>.

<sup>841</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>842</sup> Statista (2019) *Number of brand sponsored influencer posts on Instagram from 2016 to 2020 (in millions)*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/693775/instagram-sponsored-influencer-content/>

<sup>843</sup> Statista (2019) *Global Instagram influencer market size from 2017 to 2020 (in billion U.S. dollars)*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/748630/global-instagram-influencer-market-value/>

**Figure 30. Number of Brand Sponsored Influencer Posts on Instagram from 2016 to 2020 (in millions) - Statistica (2019)**



844

Who then are these individuals who hold such sway over the market? Existing in the nebulous territory somewhere between average, everyday Instagram community members and full-blown celebrities, influencers have carved out a niche for themselves in the market with unforeseen effects. The majority of these so-called influencers can be seen to be, quite simply, everyday people much like any other person.<sup>845</sup> However, quite clearly, influencers cannot be lumped in with the masses of other users as their contribution has a visibly unique effect on the platform. It is this question, “what makes an influencer an *influencer*” to which we turn now.

One of the key factor which differentiates influencers from average users of Instagram is the application of the mechanisms of marketing to the construction of a personal brand. Inasmuch, influencer marketing can be broadly associated with celebrity endorsements, such as those seen in TV commercials or other more traditional forms of advertisements.<sup>846</sup> What separates influencers from celebrities, however, is the perception by

<sup>844</sup>Statistica (2019) *Global Instagram influencer market size from 2017 to 2020 (in billion U.S. dollars)*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/748630/global-instagram-influencer-market-value/>

<sup>845</sup> Fastenau, J. (2018) Under the Influence: The Power of Social Media Influencers, *Medium*, 6 March 2018. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://medium.com/crobox/under-the-influence-the-power-of-social-media-influencers-5192571083c3>.

<sup>846</sup>Glucksman, M. (2017) The Rise of Social Media Influencer Marketing on Lifestyle Branding: A Case Study of Lucie Fink. *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, Vol. 8, No. 2 • Fall 2017

consumers the influencers are much like themselves, as opposed to celebrities who seem to exist in their own realm. Today, on any social media network, one can easily stumble across any number of individuals representing companies through the display of branded content on personal social media profiles.<sup>847</sup> In a marketplace where an increasing number of consumers are actively engaged in seeking out fellow consumers to inform their decisions about brands and products, social media has revealed a new channel for brands to communicate with the public in a more direct, authentic, organic fashion.<sup>848</sup>

This is evidenced in the rise of so-called *lifestyle influencers* on platforms such as Instagram, where seemingly everyday individuals demonstrate a plethora of products which they attest to use in everyday life as a means by which to achieve an aspirational lifestyle.<sup>849</sup> Content posted by influencers in this field serve to reinforce narratives of relevance and relatableness to followers and have caused a sea change in the way in which brands interact with consumers.<sup>850</sup> Indeed, it may even be said that influencers on Instagram represent a wholly new breed of independent, third-party endorsers who shape audience's attitudes in their posting of content, in the form of visual or verbal narratives.<sup>851</sup> With the goal of amassing followers and developing a distinct and, therefore, recognisable brand,<sup>852</sup> social media influencers achieve success by connecting with consumers directly, organically, and authentically on a human scale.<sup>853</sup> Inasmuch, influencers can be understood to be “the ultimate connection between a brand and a consumer. Through their candidness and openness with consumers, influencers have high social clout and credibility, which is what makes the phenomenon so successful.”<sup>854</sup>

### 3.4.1 Conceptualisations of the Influencer Phenomenon

**“One must pass through the network of influence. One is obligated to be influenced, and one accepts this influence very naturally. From the start, one doesn't realize this. The first thing to know: one doesn't realize one is influenced. One thinks he is already liberated, and one is far from it!”**  
**- Marcel Duchamp<sup>855</sup>**

In scholarly parlance, the term *influence* has often been employed to refer to individuals with both the ability to influence brand and product perception in consumers.<sup>856</sup> While there is yet to exist a consensus as to the breadth

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<sup>847</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>848</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>849</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>850</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>851</sup> Freberg, K., et al. (2010) Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review*, 2010.

<sup>852</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>853</sup> Adweek (2015). 10 Reasons Why Influencer Marketing is the Next Big Thing. *Adweek*. N.p., 14 July 2015.

<sup>854</sup> Buyer, Lisa. (2016) PR Under the Influence: Why Influencer Marketing is all the Buzz. *#SocialPR Chat*. N.p., 18 January 2016.

<sup>855</sup> Marcel Duchamp Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 31, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/marcel\\_duchamp\\_701779](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/marcel_duchamp_701779)

and scope of the term, for the purposes of this thesis, the term influencer is understood to be constructed upon the the notion of opinion leaders. First identified in a 1955 study by Katz and Lazarsfeld,<sup>857</sup> opinion leaders are defined as individuals “who exert a disproportionately great influence on the vote intentions of their fellows.”<sup>858</sup>

The extent to which influencers exert sway over fellow users of Instagram is, in addition, shaped by mechanisms of social learning, which is rooted in the notion that individuals typically demonstrate similar behaviour to those in their social circle.<sup>859</sup> Within this model of social exhibited behaviour also exists the concept that there are individuals who differentiate themselves as *role models*, who inherently attract the attention and interest of others.<sup>860</sup> In much the same way, recent research has demonstrated that not all individuals online exert the same degree of influence as opinion leaders.<sup>861</sup> As is such, opinion leaders serve as models of reference, who act both as a guide for behaviour on social media and also as a source of information, for average users of social media networks.<sup>862</sup>

In addition, influencers tend to be well-respected and well-known within their own communities,<sup>863</sup> enabling such individuals to serve as intermediaries in social interaction between fellow users and brands alike.<sup>864</sup> Consequently, they are the ideal actors by which to gather knowledge about consumers, which then may be used by brands to customise their products and services.<sup>865</sup> This is evidenced by the rapid adoption of influencers as intermediaries, tasked with communicating and interacting with a target audience in the aim of influencing consumption behaviours.<sup>866</sup> This trend should come as no surprise given influencers’ powerful, intermediary position on social media, and the success which marketers have achieved by harnessing said influence in the form of brand-influencer collaboration.<sup>867</sup>

Excepting those social media influencers who work exclusively with preexisting brands in the spokesperson or endorsement model typified by celebrity marketing, there exists those individuals who have developed their own human brands using social media networks as a platform. The rise of these self-made influencers is fundamentally tied to their ability to communicate directly to their followers in a fashion which

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<sup>856</sup>Booth, N., & Matic, J. (2011). Mapping and leveraging influencers in social media to shape corporate brand perceptions. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 16(3), 184-191.

<sup>857</sup> Katz, E., & Lazarsfeld, P.F. (2006). *Personal influence : The part played by people in the flow of mass communication* (2.nd ed.). New Brunswick: Transaction.

<sup>858</sup>Katz, E., & Lazarsfeld, P.F. (2006). *Personal influence : The part played by people in the flow of mass communication* (2.nd ed.). New Brunswick: Transaction. p. 32)

<sup>859</sup> Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory* (Prentice-Hall series in social learning theory). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

<sup>860</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>861</sup>Sahelices-Pinto, C., & Rodríguez-Santos, C. (2014). E-WoM and 2.0 Opinion Leaders. *Journal of Food Products Marketing*, 20(3), 244-261.

<sup>862</sup>Nip, J., & Fu, K. (2016). Challenging Official Propaganda? Public Opinion Leaders on Sina Weibo \*. *The China Quarterly*, 225, 122-144.

<sup>863</sup>Sahelices-Pinto, C., & Rodríguez-Santos, C. (2014). E-WoM and 2.0 Opinion Leaders. *Journal of Food Products Marketing*, 20(3), 244-261.

<sup>864</sup>Anderson, Philip., & Anderson, Erin. (2002). The new e-commerce intermediaries. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 43(4), 53-62.

<sup>865</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>866</sup>Johnstone, L., & Lindh, C. (2018). The sustainability-age dilemma: A theory of (un)planned behaviour via influencers. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 17(1), 127-139.

<sup>867</sup>Gustavsson, A., Suleman Nasir, A. & Ishonova, S. (2018) *Towards a world of influencers: Exploring the relationship building dimensions of Influencer Marketing*. Thesis, Jönköping International Business School, May 21, 2018.

feels authentic or organic to their audience.<sup>868</sup> Social media influencers, therefore, can be understood to be individuals who strategically identify, amass, and maintain an audience, with the intention of forming a personal brand.<sup>869</sup> In order to do so effectively, influencers must be both attractive and inspirational and regularly interact with followers in comments and posts.<sup>870</sup> Said influencers may have either a small or large following with which they interact, thereby holding sway over spheres of *macro-influence* or *micro-influence*. By means of differentiating *macro-influence* and *micro-influence*, it can be said that the former experience a greater geographical or social distance from their followers, while the latter have a significantly small follower base and, therefore, experience greater closeness.<sup>871</sup>

On balance, social media as it exists today on platforms such as Instagram can be understood to provide a channel through which anyone - nobodies included - may take on the role of an influencer<sup>872</sup> by way of generating a memorable, relatable, online presence.<sup>873</sup> As an increasing number of firms have begun to collaborate with influential individuals in the world of social media, “the ‘nobodies’ of the past [have become] the ‘somebodies’ of the present, requiring attention from marketers who search for ways to build closer relations with customers.”<sup>874</sup>

### 3.4.2 Metrics of Instagram Influence

**“The influencer strategy hasn't been built around celebrities. We're looking for influencers within every marketplace, who are the people who help influence decision-makers within that community.”**  
- Keith Belling<sup>875</sup>

With influencer marketing set to become \$10 billion annual industry worldwide,<sup>876</sup> it is incumbent upon marketers to better understand how influencers target their audiences, especially those niche audiences which

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<sup>868</sup>Freberg, K., Palenchar, M. J., & Veil, S. R. (2013). Managing and sharing H1N1 crisis information using social media bookmarking services. *Public Relations Review*, 39(3), 178-184.

<sup>869</sup>Marvick, A.E., & Boyd, D. (2010). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society* 13(1), 114-133.

<sup>870</sup>Djafarova, E., & Trofimenko, O. (2018). ‘Instafamous’ – credibility and self-presentation of micro-celebrities on social media. *Information, Communication & Society*, 1-15.

<sup>871</sup>Lin, H., Bruning, P.F., & Swarna, H. (2018). Using online opinion leaders to promote the hedonic and utilitarian value of products and services. *Business Horizons* 61(3), 1-12.

<sup>872</sup>Sammis, K., Lincoln, C., Pomponi, S., Ng, J., Gassman Rodriguez, E., & Zhou, J. (2015). *Influencer Marketing for Dummies*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.

<sup>873</sup>Castellano, S., & Dutot, V. (2017). Investigating the Influence of E-Word-of-Mouth on E-Reputation. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 47(1), 42-60.

<sup>874</sup>Booth, N., & Matic, J. (2011). Mapping and leveraging influencers in social media to shape corporate brand perceptions. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 16(3), 184-191.

<sup>875</sup>Keith Belling Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 31, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keith\\_belling\\_693263](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keith_belling_693263)

<sup>876</sup>Contestabile, G. (2018) Influencer Marketing in 2018: Becoming an Efficient Marketplace. *Adweek*, 15 January 2018. Accessed 29 April 2019,

have traditionally been unreachable by conventional forms of advertising and marketing.<sup>877</sup> As the voice of a brand, either his or her own human brand or in the facility of a brand ambassador, influencers engage in a two-way conversation between brand and consumers, that is of an ever increasing value to firms.<sup>878</sup> However, not all conversations between influencers, as representatives of both personal and corporate brands, can be said to be effective. As Gillin notes, there are a wide range of factors which can be attributed to the success or failure of an influencer marketing campaign, ranging difficult-to-measure criteria, such as “quality of content,” to highly measurable factors including page views and search engine rank.<sup>879</sup> In addition to these two metrics of successful, other criteria developed for assessing influence include: participation level; frequency of activity; and social prominence.<sup>880</sup> In the rapidly evolving environment of social media networks, these criteria are subject to change, it should be noted, however.

Inasmuch, influencers only exert influence in contexts in which their behaviour is socially observable, as is indicated by the criteria listed above. As Bandura, the preeminent social-science theorist from whom much of our current understanding of social mechanisms originates, argued, “in the social learning system, new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behaviors of others,”<sup>881</sup> thus, influencers are so *influential* “on the basis of informative feedback, they (consumers) develop thoughts or hypotheses about the types of behavior most likely to succeed.”<sup>882</sup> Influencers then can be understood to be leaders, or role models, for their followers, a hypothesis supported by evidence which suggests that individuals are significantly more likely to adopt the behaviors of influencers than of other users.<sup>883</sup> However, for social media influencers to play a formative role in the shaping of consumers’ opinions, they must first meet a number of basic criteria rooted in cognitive biases, as further elaborated below:<sup>884</sup>

*Credibility and social proof:* for an influencer to be credible in the eyes of his or her followers, he or she must exhibit trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and similarity.<sup>885</sup> These factors, it should be noted, are dependent upon perceptions of power and, in accordance with French and Raven’s concept of power bases, are fundamentally shaped by audience interpretation.<sup>886</sup> Therefore, influencers who

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<https://www.adweek.com/digital/giordano-contestabile-activate-by-bloglovin-guest-post-influencer-marketing-in-2018/>

<sup>877</sup>Ledbetter, Erin. (2016) The Change in Influencer Marketing from PR Strategy to Media Strategy. *Carusele*. N.p., 03 Nov. 2016.

<sup>878</sup>Booth, N., & Matic, J. (2011). Mapping and leveraging influencers in social media to shape corporate brand perceptions. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 16(3), 184-191.

<sup>879</sup> Gillin, P (2008). *Secrets of Social Media Marketing: How to Use Online Conversations and Customer Communities to Turbo-Charge Your Business!*. Fresno, Verenigde Staten: Quill Driver Books.

<sup>880</sup> Booth, N., & Matic, J. (2011). Mapping and leveraging influencers in social media to shape corporate brand perceptions. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 16(3), 184-191.

<sup>881</sup> Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory* (Prentice-Hall series in social learning theory). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, p. 3.

<sup>882</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>883</sup>Forbes, K. (2016) Examining the Beauty Industry’s Use of Social Influencers. *Elon Communications Journal* 7 (Fall 2016)

<sup>884</sup>Glucksman, M. (2017) The Rise of Social Media Influencer Marketing on Lifestyle Branding: A Case Study of Lucie Fink. *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, Vol. 8, No. 2 • Fall 2017

<sup>885</sup>Fastenau, J. (2018) Under the Influence: The Power of Social Media Influencers, *Medium*, 6 March 2018. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://medium.com/crobox/under-the-influence-the-power-of-social-media-influencers-5192571083c3>.

<sup>886</sup> French, J., & Raven, B. (1960) *The Bases of Social Power*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.

demonstrate expertise in a given field are perceived to have greater authority.<sup>887</sup> Moreover, influencers who accrue vast numbers of followers, shares, and likes are perceived as having considerable authority, leading to greater adherence to their judgments.

*Attractiveness*: the strategic use of attractive brand representatives is by no means a new development within the field of marketing; however, that does not mean it should be overlooked as a key determinant of influencer success.<sup>888</sup> Attractiveness bias, in which a wide range of positive qualities are subconsciously attributed to attractive or otherwise appealing individuals by virtue of his or her good looks, is a powerful force in influencer marketing.<sup>889</sup> Indeed, the favourable impressions which attractive influencers engender are also often extended to the products they recommend, subconsciously priming consumers to look to influencers for guidance in product-related decisions.<sup>890</sup>

*Relatability*: relatability is fundamental for influencer success and may be seen as the key factor which differentiates influencers from celebrities on one hand, and other users on the other.<sup>891</sup> As paradoxical as it may seem, influencers are perceived by most users as being quite average and relatable, despite amassing legions of followers to rival that of established celebrities.<sup>892</sup> Along these lines, the most successful influencers continue to post scenes from everyday life as a means by which to maintain a connection with their followers.<sup>893</sup> Moreover, because influencers tend to be similar in age and origins to their audiences, they are more likely to trigger feelings of shared membership to a social group, as is seen in social identity theory.<sup>894</sup> Accordingly, as the majority of influencers may be designated as millennials - a notoriously challenging demographic to reach for marketers - they are ideally positioned to become role models for younger audiences.<sup>895</sup>

*Authenticity*: arguably the single most important determinant of success in an influencer campaign, authenticity necessitates a certain degree of self-awareness and transparency.<sup>896</sup> Inasmuch, brand collaboration must feel genuine and entered into not for profit-seeking motivations, but as a kind of voluntary service which influencers undertake based on a feeling of kinship with a brand and a desire to

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<sup>887</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>888</sup> Fastenau, J. (2018) Under the Influence: The Power of Social Media Influencers, *Medium*, 6 March 2018. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://medium.com/crobox/under-the-influence-the-power-of-social-media-influencers-5192571083c3>.

<sup>889</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>890</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>891</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>892</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>893</sup> Fastenau, J. (2018) Under the Influence: The Power of Social Media Influencers, *Medium*, 6 March 2018. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://medium.com/crobox/under-the-influence-the-power-of-social-media-influencers-5192571083c3>.

<sup>894</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>895</sup> O'Neil-Hart, C., Blumenstein, H. (2016) *Why YouTube stars are more influential than traditional celebrities*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/youtube-stars-influence/>

<sup>896</sup> Fastenau, J. (2018) Under the Influence: The Power of Social Media Influencers, *Medium*, 6 March 2018. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://medium.com/crobox/under-the-influence-the-power-of-social-media-influencers-5192571083c3>.

communicate heartfelt recommendations to followers.<sup>897</sup> In addition, communication of this nature must be explicitly transparent, with any attempts at promotion or advertising clearly displayed as such.<sup>898</sup> Millennial audiences, in particular, are sticklers for brand transparency and are likely to feel deceived by attempts to obfuscate brand-influencer marketing.<sup>899</sup> Moreover, as the result of recent legislation designed to regulate the posting of sponsored content, there is now a legal requirement for users to explicitly state whether or not they have received compensation from a firm for their post.<sup>900</sup>

Therefore, credibility, attractiveness, relatability, and authenticity may be understood to be key indicators of influencers' influence.<sup>901</sup> They also serve as markers by which to differentiate influencers from average users of social media networks on one hand, and celebrities on the other.

### 3.4.3 Influencer Marketing on Social Media

**“An artist's sphere of influence is the world.”**

**- Carl Maria von Weber<sup>902</sup>**

As has been previously noted in social influencer marketing is a rapidly growing trend in the industry,<sup>903</sup> and with countless firms turning to influencers in order to increase brand awareness and visibility by means of social influence by association.<sup>904</sup> Departing from the celebrity endorsement model,<sup>905</sup> contemporary consumers have a distinct preference for user-generated content, as opposed to other, more traditional forms of media and brand communication.<sup>906</sup> Moreover, the Internet, that great leveller of humanity, has drawn celebrities and influencers ever closer to their audiences by way of a variety of social media channels. The proven effectiveness of communication on such channels proffers an invaluable opportunity for brands to tell their stories and

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<sup>897</sup> Nguyen, C., Romaniuk, J. (2014) Pass it on: A framework for classifying the content of word of mouth Australian Marketing Journal Vol. 22, Issue 2, 117-124.

<sup>898</sup> Fastenau, J. (2018) Under the Influence: The Power of Social Media Influencers, *Medium*, 6 March 2018. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://medium.com/crobox/under-the-influence-the-power-of-social-media-influencers-5192571083c3>.

<sup>899</sup> Fromm, J. (2017) Why Label Transparency Matters When It Comes To Millennial Brand Loyalty. *Forbes*, 13 December 2017. Accessed 01 May 2019,

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jefffromm/2017/12/13/why-label-transparency-matters-when-it-comes-to-millennial-brand-loyalty/#6d436913daca>

<sup>900</sup> Hosie, R. (2018) There's Now an Official Guide for Social Media Influencers Posting Adverts. *The Independent*, 28 September 2018. Accessed 01 May 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/social-media-influencers-adverts-guide-asa-law-instagram-cma-a8559406.html>

<sup>901</sup> Fastenau, J. (2018) Under the Influence: The Power of Social Media Influencers, *Medium*, 6 March 2018. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://medium.com/crobox/under-the-influence-the-power-of-social-media-influencers-5192571083c3>.

<sup>902</sup> Carl Maria von Weber Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved June 2, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/carl\\_maria\\_von\\_weber\\_212398](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/carl_maria_von_weber_212398)

<sup>903</sup> Singh, J., Quamina, LT, & Xue, T. (2017). Ten Million Followers and Counting: How Digital Brand Alliances Between Online Influencers and Brands Impact Consumer Value: An Abstract Perceptions.

<sup>904</sup> Chung, TS, Wedel, M., & Rust, RT (2016). Adaptive personalization using social networks. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 44(1), 66-87.

<sup>905</sup> Kaikati, JG (1987). Celebrity Advertising: A Review and Synthesis. *International Journal of Advertising*, 6(2), 93-105.

<sup>906</sup> Barker, S. (2016). Reaching the Masses: The Secret Guide To Instagram Influencer Marketing. Business.com. Carlsbad. U

strengthen relationships with consumers.<sup>907</sup> In such a conversation, brands, including those of the human variety, must be willing to listen to consumers and actively participate in the creation of the dialogue between the two parties.<sup>908</sup> For this reason, influencers with their heightened ability to engage with followers in a two-sided conversation, are ideal candidates for brand storytelling.

How then can influencer marketing be defined? Most definitions of the practice stem from its root word, *influence*, which “can be broadly defined as the power to affect a person, thing or course of events”<sup>909</sup> and influencer being “a third-party who significantly shapes the customer’s purchasing decision, but may ever be accountable for it.”<sup>910</sup> Hence, influencers may be defined as “individuals who have the power to affect purchase decisions of others because of their authority, knowledge, position, or relationship.”<sup>911</sup> Following from this definition, social influence marketing has been defined by Singh et al. as,

*a technique that employs social media (content created by everyday people using highly accessible and scalable technologies such as blogs, message boards, podcasts, microblogs, bookmarks, social networks, communities, wikis, and vlogs) and social influencers (everyday people who have an outsized influence on their peers by virtue of how much content they share online) to achieve an organization’s marketing and business needs.*<sup>912</sup>

Influencer marketing, therefore, may be present on a variety of social media channels and take on the form of a wide range types of content, both verbal and visual.

In addition, influencer marketing may take two forms: *paid* and *earned*. Much as its name suggests, paid influencer marketing is based upon the directly payment of influencers for the promotion of a brand, and its products, to their followers.<sup>913</sup> Conversely, earned influencer marketing does not involve direct payment of influencers, but instead is based upon other forms of exchange, such as the gifting of promotional products.<sup>914</sup> While both models have their advantages, economic incentives have been shown to better encourage influencers to disseminate brand’s message to their followers and are, thus, more effective.<sup>915</sup> It should be noted, however, that when sponsored-message are not disclosed, a loss of trust occurs between influencers and the influenced, greatly reducing the efficacy of the message,<sup>916</sup> especially for millennial audiences.<sup>917</sup> Indeed, this form of

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<sup>907</sup>Vaynerchuk, G. (2013) *Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook: How to Tell Your Story in a Noisy Social World*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.

<sup>908</sup>Labrecque, L.I. (2014). Fostering consumer–brand relationships in social media environments: The role of parasocial interaction. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(2),134-148

<sup>909</sup>Brown, D., Hayes, N. (2008) *Influencer Marketing, Who really influences your customers?* UK: Elsevier Ltd, 235 pages. p.50.

<sup>910</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>911</sup>Business Dictionary. (2018) Influencer, *Business Dictionary*. Accessed 02 May 2019, <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/influencers.html>

<sup>912</sup>Singh, S. (2012). Brand Performances in Social Media. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 12. 189-197. 10.1016/j.intmar.2012.04.001

<sup>913</sup> Sudha, M., & Sheena, K. (2017). Impact of Influencers in Consumer Decision Process: the Fashion Industry. *SCMS Journal of Indian Management* 14(3),14-30.

<sup>914</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>915</sup>Sudha, M., & Sheena, K. (2017). Impact of Influencers in Consumer Decision Process: the Fashion Industry. *SCMS Journal of Indian Management* 14(3),14-30.

<sup>916</sup>Magnini, V. (2011). The implications of company-sponsored messages disguised as word-of-mouth. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 25(4), 243-251.

<sup>917</sup> Hosie, R. (2018) There’s Now an Official Guide for Social Media Influencers Posting Adverts. *The Independent*, 28 September 2018. Accessed 01 May 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/social-media-influencers-adverts-guide-asa-law-instagram-cma-a8559406.html>

word-of-mouth advertising by means of influencer interactions, content, and communication is highly affected by consumers notions of organicness, authenticity, appeal, and transparency.

Furthermore, this particular strand of word-of-mouth advertising is considered to be amongst the most effective techniques deployed by influencer marketing practitioners,<sup>918</sup> with the capacity to mould the behavior of individuals.<sup>919</sup> Much to this point, communication between influencers and their audiences has been shown to be so persuasive that it may even be used to change the attitudes and behaviors of consumers,<sup>920</sup> to the extent that it has been argued that WOM is the main communication channel through which to shift perceptions of a firm and influence its reputation online.<sup>921</sup>

In addition to shaping consumer opinions of a brand, influencer marketing is a crucial element of relationship building today. Through the strategic deployment of social media as a conduit by which to interact with a brand's target audience,<sup>922</sup> firms are more easily able to forge relationships with consumers.<sup>923</sup> However, this does not equate to all communications between brands and consumers being constructive: in essence, simply posting content does not necessarily enhance the conversation, nor does it necessarily result in the formation of a relationship with their audience.<sup>924</sup> Thus, while influencer collaboration may provide brands with an opportunity to initiate conversation with consumers, the relationship between target audience, influencer, and brand must be carefully managed in order to facilitate effective communication between all parties.<sup>925</sup> As a foundational principle of such communication, brands must seek to nurture positive, trusting relations with influencers that are based on mutual respect.<sup>926</sup> As increasing numbers of consumers round the world seek out the recommendations of influencers, who appear to be trusted friends, successful brand marketers must learn to better connect with consumers by speaking the language of influence.<sup>927</sup>

This trend is supported by recent statistics on size of the global influencer market on Instagram, which is projected to grow by \$2.38 billion in 2019.<sup>928</sup> In addition, according to a recent report, upwards of 80% of the marketers surveyed claimed to be implementing collaborations with influencers in their marketing strategies in

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<sup>918</sup>Razi, F., Lajevardi, M., Orouei, M., Saedi, H., & Khatami, R. (2017). Evaluation of the Relationship between Consumers' Cultural Values and Word of Mouth Marketing based on Hofstede's Studies. *International Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 11(1), 1467- 1475.

<sup>919</sup> Wang, S. J., Hsu, C. P., Huang, H. C., & Chen, C. L. (2015), How readers' perceived self congruity and functional congruity affect bloggers' informational influence: Perceived interactivity as a moderator. *Online Information Review*, 39(4), pp. 537-555.

<sup>920</sup> Wang, S. J., Hsu, C. P., Huang, H. C., & Chen, C. L. (2015), How readers' perceived self congruity and functional congruity affect bloggers' informational influence: Perceived interactivity as a moderator. *Online Information Review*, 39(4), pp. 537-555.

<sup>921</sup>Castellano, S., & Dutot, V. (2017). Investigating the Influence of E-Word-of-Mouth on E-Reputation. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 47(1), 42-60.

<sup>922</sup>Allagui, I., & Breslow, H. (2016). Social media for public relations: Lessons from four effective cases. *Public Relations Review*, 42(1), 20-30.

<sup>923</sup> Bogner, W. C., & Barr, P. S. (2000), Making sense in hypercompetitive environments: A cognitive explanation for the persistence of high velocity competition. *Organization Science*, 11, pp. 212-226.

<sup>924</sup>Valentini, C. (2015). Is using social media "good" for the public relations profession? A critical reflection. *Public Relations Review*, 41(2), 170-177.

<sup>925</sup>Pang, A., Yingzhi Tan, E., Song-Qi Lim, R., Yue-Ming Kwan, T., & Bhardwaj Lakhanpal, P. (2016). Building effective relations with social media influencers in Singapore. *Media Asia*, 1-13.

<sup>926</sup> Gustavsson, A., Suleman Nasir, A. & Ishonova, S. (2018) Towards a world of influencers: Exploring the relationship building dimensions of Influencer Marketing. Thesis, Jönköping International Business School, May 21, 2018.

<sup>927</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>928</sup> Relatable (2019). The 2019 State of Influencer Marketing Report. Accessed 05 May 2019, <https://www.relatable.me/the-state-of-influencer-marketing-2019>

2019.<sup>929</sup> This surge in the number of professionals collaborating with influencers largely stems from a need to access the youth market, with 78% of influencer campaigns in 2019 being targeted towards millennials.<sup>930</sup> Of those campaigns, there has been a particular concentration of activity in the fashion, luxury, and cosmetics industry, which has aggressively targeted younger consumers on social media platforms in an attempt to expand their audience to a new generation. Of those in the aforementioned fields polled,

*90.6% confirmed that the activities they carried out with influencers effectively generated brand awareness for their companies or products. 89.5% said that working with influencers was effective as a support for their digital strategies. 76% highlighted that influencer campaigns are effective for building customer loyalty. 75.7% find influencer marketing effective for driving sales.*<sup>931</sup>

This is due to the leap in recognition of effectiveness of influencer campaigns throughout the industry. This movement towards influencer based marketing is most observable in content creation communities, most notably, Instagram.<sup>932</sup> It should be noted, however, that the platform experienced a slight drop in the percentage of influencers who use this channel (1.6%). By way of comparison, channels that have witnessed the greatest decline in popularity amongst influencers were Twitter (10.8%), and Facebook (9.6%).<sup>933</sup> This comes amid news of flagging growth in the field as the market becomes increasingly oversaturated. Indeed, despite reports of stabilisation in the influencer marketing industry, there is evidence of continued growth, especially in areas of the world, such as South America and Africa, where the practice is just emerging.<sup>934</sup> It should be noted, however, that there are those holdouts within the profession who continue to avoid working with these key opinion leaders, mostly owing either to budget constraints (62%) or a lack of knowledge and tools to properly identify and manage influencers (54%).<sup>935</sup>

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<sup>929</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>930</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>931</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>932</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>933</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>934</sup> Relatable (2019). The 2019 State of Influencer Marketing Report. Accessed 05 May 2019, <https://www.relatable.me/the-state-of-influencer-marketing-2019>

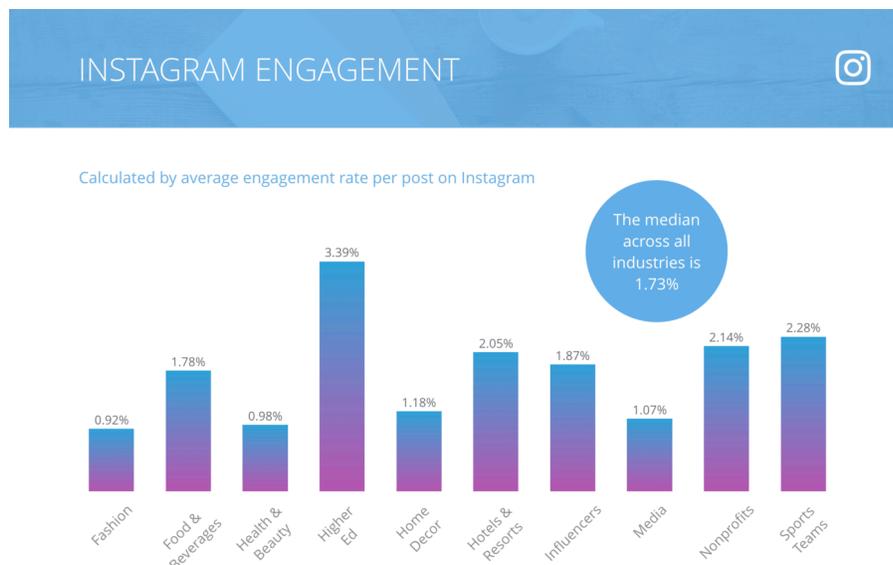
<sup>935</sup> Ibidem.

### 3.4.4 Influencer Marketing on Instagram

“Calling 'Instagram' a photo-sharing app is like calling a newspaper a letter-sharing book, or a Mozart grand era symphony a series of notes. 'Instagram' is less about the medium and more about the network.”  
- Kevin Systrom<sup>936</sup>

As Instagram is the platform on which the most influencers are active as of 2018,<sup>937</sup> it should come as no surprise then that marketers have focussed their attention on the network, as opposed to its competitors. With engagement rates of as high as 3.39% in some sectors,<sup>938</sup> as illustrated in the figure below, Instagram consistently outperforms its competitors in terms of social action and user engagement by as much as 23%,<sup>939</sup> and brands, in particular, see 10x higher engagement rates on Instagram as they do on Facebook.<sup>940</sup>

Figure 31. *Instagram Engagement - (2018)*



<sup>936</sup> Kevin Systrom Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 31, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/kevin\\_systrom\\_752122](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/kevin_systrom_752122)

<sup>937</sup>Boekee, S., Van der Veer, N., Hoekstra, H., & Peters, O. (2018). Nationale Social Media Onderzoek. Geraadpleegd van <https://www.bindinc.nl/wpcontent/>

<sup>938</sup>Feehan, B. (2018) 2018 Social Media Industry Benchmark Report, *Rival HQ* 02 April 2018. Accessed 03 May 2018, <https://www.rivaliq.com/blog/2018-social-media-industry-benchmark-report/>

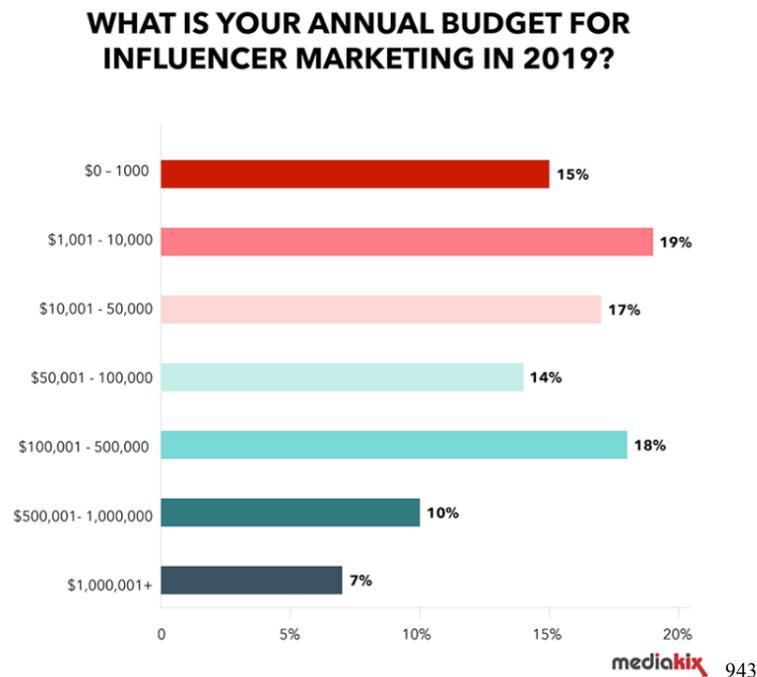
<sup>939</sup>Dogtiev, A. (2018) Instagram Revenue and Usage Statistics - 2018. *Business of Apps*, 18 September 2018. Accessed 03 May 2019, <http://www.businessofapps.com/data/instagram-statistics/>

<sup>940</sup>Elliott, N. (2015) How Does Your Brand Stack Up on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram? *Forrester*, 15 September 2015. Accessed 03 May 2019, [https://go.forrester.com/blogs/15-09-15-how\\_does\\_your\\_brand\\_stack\\_up\\_on\\_facebook\\_twitter\\_and\\_instagram/](https://go.forrester.com/blogs/15-09-15-how_does_your_brand_stack_up_on_facebook_twitter_and_instagram/)

Instagram may, in addition, be said to resonate especially strongly with younger audiences, who are considerably more likely to purchase products or services based on Instagram influencers' recommendations than their older counterparts.<sup>941</sup>

As noted in the preceding section, finding the right influencer is essential to any social influencer marketing campaign, "as the current paradigm of influence marketing puts the influencer at the center of the marketing universe."<sup>942</sup> This notion is further reinforced by a sheer amount of investment being made in the field, as evidenced by the figure below:

**Figure 32. What's Your Annual Budget for Influencer Marketing 2019 - Mediakix 2019**



Much of a firm's investment in influencer marketing is earmarked for payment to influencers for sponsored posts. While compensation for influencers range from free products to upwards of half a million dollars per post

<sup>941</sup>O'Neil-Hart, C., Blumenstein, H. (2016) *Why YouTube stars are more influential than traditional celebrities*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/youtube-stars-influence/>

<sup>942</sup>Biaudet, S. (2017) *Influencer Marketing as a Marketing Tool The process of creating an Influencer Marketing Campaign on Instagram*. Thesis: Arcada.

<sup>943</sup>Bailis, R. (2019) *The State of Influencer Marketing: 10 Influencer Marketing Statistics to Inform Where You Invest*. *Big Commerce*. Accessed 05 May 2019, <https://www.bigcommerce.com/blog/influencer-marketing-statistics/#10-most-important-influencer-marketing-statistics-for-2019>

for celebrity influencers,<sup>944</sup> macro-influencers, such as Huda Kattan, Cameron Dallas, Jen Selter, Zoella, and Nash Grier earn roughly \$10,000 per post.<sup>945</sup> On a much smaller scale, micro-influencers can expect to be paid roughly \$50 per post.<sup>946</sup> While payment for content may range greatly between influencers, their influence is invaluable for marketers. This is especially true in an age when more and more consumers have reduced trust in the media, as has been seen in the latest reports from the Edelman's Trust Barometer.<sup>947</sup> Influencers, who often feel like trusted friends for their followers, therefore, offer an inroad to audiences who are increasingly distrustful and skeptical of brand communication.

### 3.4.5 Theories of Social Influence

**“The leverage and influence social media gives citizens are rapidly spreading into the business world.”**

**- Simon Mainwaring<sup>948</sup>**

The social sway which influencers on Instagram exert can be understood through the lens of *theories of influence* taken from disciplines ranging from psychology to sociology. In essence, theories of influence refer to the effect that actions, words, or the presence of others have on our behavior, feelings, attitudes, or thoughts in a social context.<sup>949</sup> Within this conceptual framework, influence is understood to be exerted in a variety of ways, such as when expectations are explicitly stated or rules drawn up, or more subtly, as when socially appropriate behaviour is modelled.<sup>950</sup> Elaborated below are a number of theories of social influence pertinent to this thesis:

*Informational social influence*: informational social influence refers to the influence on others which is exerted in information gathering scenarios.<sup>951</sup> In effect, this particular form of influence often presents itself in situations where individuals are required to adjust their behaviour to better suit social norms. In the context of influencers marketing, influencers can be understood to be role models who set the tone of social interaction with their followers adjusting accordingly.

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<sup>944</sup> Influencer Marketing Hub (2017)15 Mind Blowing Instagram Statistics You Don't Know. Accessed 05 May 2019, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/15-instagram-influencer-statistics/>

<sup>945</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>946</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>947</sup> Dawson., A. (2018) Australians' trust in media at an all time low finds Edelman's 'Trust Barometer'. *Mumbrella*, 7 February 2018. Accessed 05 May 2019, <https://mumbrella.com.au/edelmans-trust-barometer-shows-trust-in-media-at-an-all-time-low-but-trust-in-journalism-rebounds-497401>

<sup>948</sup> Simon Mainwaring Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 31, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/simon\\_mainwaring\\_493956](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/simon_mainwaring_493956)

<sup>949</sup> Van Reijmersdal, E. A., Fransen, M. L., van Noort, G., Oprea, S. J., Vandeberg, L., Reusch, S., ... & Boerman, S. C. (2016). Effects of disclosing sponsored content in blogs: How the use of resistance strategies mediates effects on persuasion. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60(12), pp. 1458-1474.

<sup>950</sup> Leskovec, J., Adamic, L.A., & Huberman, B.A. (2007). The dynamics of viral marketing. *Journal ACM Transactions on the Web*, 1(1), 5.

<sup>951</sup> Watts, D.J., & Dodds, P.S. (2007). Influentials, networks, and public opinion formation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34(4), 441-458.

*Normative social influence*: influence exerted on others may also be normative, in the sense that for individuals to be accepted socially, they must adapt to social norms.<sup>952</sup> In scenarios such as these, where the desire to belong shapes behaviour, the degree to which social influence is applied is variable, with some actors having an intensified ability to shape behaviour and perceptions.<sup>953</sup> In addition, it has been shown that the social environment exerts unconscious influence, meaning that in the case of influencers on social media, the platform itself dictates the ways in which influence is exercised, and how role models are identified.<sup>954</sup>

*Top-down school of influence*: as defined by Berelson, Gaudet, and Lazarsfeld, the inventors of the two-step flow theory, in every society there are those individuals who differentiate themselves by exhibiting exceptional traits, who become our opinion leaders.<sup>955</sup> Within this model, later expanded by Rogers, information is adopted via the top-down, which then trickles down from innovators to early adopters, to the early majority, the late majority, and, ultimately, to the laggards of society.<sup>956</sup> What should be noted here is that there is a stark difference between the former two groups and all those who follow. Indeed, in the context of social media, it is influencers who can be seen to be the innovators and early adopters, with average users being those who follow. In addition, with the conceptual framework of top-down influence devised by Gladwell in his works, *Law of the Few* and *The Tipping Point*, is identified three states of *epidemic change*, which result in influence.<sup>957</sup> Within such states, humanity can be grouped into three distinct categories: *the connectors*, *the mavens*, and *the persuaders*.<sup>958</sup> Influencers, and celebrities for that matter, can be seen as embodying these three aspects of change, with average users of Instagram can be seen to be the persuadable.

*Bottom-up school of influence*: conversely, the bottom-up school argues that it is precisely when individuals are less connected people that they have the greatest influence on the distribution of information. These less connected members of social groups, form relationships known as “weak ties” with one another. Watts, a proponent of the theory, argues that the investment made on social influencers by marketers is largely for nought as it is weak ties which are the crucial to the distribution of information on social media.<sup>959</sup> It is for this very reason that it is believed that social influencers possess too many contacts to be effectively influential.

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<sup>952</sup>Khan, M. (2007). Consumer and Advertising. New Delhi, India: New Age International Publishers.

<sup>953</sup>Belch, M.A., & Belch, G.E.(2014). Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communications Perspective (10 ed.). Columbus, Verenigde Staten: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

<sup>954</sup>Keng, C. Tran. V. D, Leeti. T.M (2013). Relationships among Brand Experience, Brand Personality, And Customer Experiential Value. Journal of Contemporary Management Research. 9 (3), 247-262.

<sup>955</sup>Berelson, B.,Lazarsfeld, P.F.,& Gaudet,H. (1948). The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign (2e ed.). New York,Columbia University Press.

<sup>956</sup> Rogers, C. R. (1951). Client-centered therapy: Its current practice, implications and theory. London: Constable.

<sup>957</sup> Gladwell M., (2001),The Tipping Point How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference, New York, Little, Brown and Company.

<sup>958</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>959</sup> Watts, D. J., & Dodds, P. S. (2007),Influentials, networks, and public opinion formation. Journal of Consumer Research, 34(4), pp.441–458.

In summation, influencers may be best understood to be online advertisers within their self-defined and regulated social networks established on social media networks that are shaped by sociological, cultural, economic, and psychological forces.<sup>960</sup>

### 3.5 Celebrities: The Apex of Human Brands

**“Isn't it amazing how celebrity status preempts even the most ingrained hatreds?”  
- Camryn Manheim<sup>961</sup>**

Within the last decade, the number of public figures who may be considered to be *celebrities* has grown substantially across a wide range of fields, including entertainment, sport, science and technology, and even politics.<sup>962</sup> Owing in large part to the rise of social media and the growth of new channels of communication between opinion leaders and the general public, celebrities, and celebrity culture more generally, have become a crucial point of reference for consumers. The power of influence held by those individuals, who have been designated to be celebrities, is evidenced by the fact that the majority of young adults (75%) have been proven to exhibit a strong attraction to a celebrity at some point.<sup>963</sup> While it may be argued that social media influencers, especially those active on Instagram and YouTube, have begun to eclipse traditional celebrities in terms of reach and influence,<sup>964</sup> celebrities still hold enormous sway over the hearts and minds of vast swathes of the population, in particular those aged 45 and older.<sup>965</sup> Indeed, rather than considering influencers to be a breed of their own, influencers are best understood as a modern iteration of celebrity, designed for the digital environment.<sup>966</sup> Just as influencers thrive on today's social media networks by appealing to a target audience, so too have celebrities traditionally enjoyed fame and significant media coverage based on their appeal to a given audience. Thus, deciphering what it is that renders a celebrity appealing in the eyes of his or her audience is necessary to understanding how celebrities' images may be used to best effect, whether endorsing a product or launching their own branded products as an extension of a human brand.<sup>967</sup>

The term itself, *celebrity*, has a history much older than one might expect. Celebrity, which was,

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<sup>960</sup> de Mauregnault, F. (2018), Marketing meets social influencers A study into the influence of social influencers on Instagram on the consumer behavior of Instagram users, University of Rotterdam

<sup>961</sup> Camryn Manheim Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 31, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/camryn\\_manheim\\_289342](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/camryn_manheim_289342)

<sup>962</sup> McCutcheon, L. E., Lange, R., & Houran, J. (2002), Evidence for non-pathological and pathological dimensions of celebrity worship. *British Journal of Psychology*, 93 (1), pp.67– 87.

<sup>963</sup> Boon, S. D., & Lomore, C. D. (2001), Admirer-celebrity relationships among young adults: explaining perceptions of celebrity influence on identity. *Human Communication Research*, 27 (3), pp.432–465.

<sup>964</sup> O'Neil-Hart, C., Blumenstein, H. (2016) *Why YouTube stars are more influential than traditional celebrities*. Accessed 29 April 2019, <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/youtube-stars-influence/>

<sup>965</sup> Karp, K. (2016) New Research: The Value of Influencers on Twitter. *Twitter Blog*, 10 May 2016. Accessed 03 May 2019, [https://blog.twitter.com/marketing/en\\_us/a/2016/new-research-the-value-of-influencers-on-twitter.html](https://blog.twitter.com/marketing/en_us/a/2016/new-research-the-value-of-influencers-on-twitter.html)

<sup>966</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>967</sup> Lunardo R., Gergaud O., Livat F., (2015), Celebrities as human brands: An investigation of the effects of personality and time on celebrities' appeal, *Journal of Marketing Management*.

arguably, introduced to the Anglosphere by Chaucer in the fourteenth-century,<sup>968</sup> has traditionally been associated with a kind of extraordinariness which places those on whom fame has been bestowed a transcendence or omnipresence.<sup>969</sup> Taxonomically, they exist “on some plane between ours and that of the gods.”<sup>970</sup> Inasmuch, even when stars appear to be “just like us,”<sup>971</sup> a concept bolstered by the seemingly everyday nature of content posted by celebrities on social media channels, they also have an incandescence of their own which seems to infuse their every action with an ineffable stardom,<sup>972</sup> due in large part to the West’s long-standing tendency to tie the human to the heavenly.<sup>973</sup>

From Chaucer to Ovid, the notion of metamorphosis,<sup>974</sup> in which mere mortals may be transformed into stars, is a foundational trope in Western culture. Within Hollywood’s own firmament, with its gleaming constellation of stars, celebrities exist as heavenly creatures, somehow more than human, that are “both distant and accessible, gleaming and sparkling and yet reassuringly omnipresent. Stars have long suggested a kind of order—and orientation—within chaotic human lives. They have long hinted that there is something bigger, something beyond, something more.”<sup>975</sup>

### 3.5.1 Celebrity Defined

“...an ever-fixed mark / That looks on tempests and is never shaken; / It is the star to every wand’ring bark, / Whose worth’s unknown, although his height be taken.”  
- Shakespeare, *King Lear*<sup>976</sup>

This notion of otherness, and the creation of a social elite,<sup>977</sup> is widely addressed in the literature;<sup>978</sup> however, most research in the field concerns itself with celebrities in their role as public relations agents<sup>979</sup> or as celebrity

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<sup>968</sup> Chaucer in the House of Fame, Oxford Dictionary, <https://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2013/01/02/chaucer-in-the-house-of-fame/>

<sup>969</sup> Basinger J. (2009), *The Star Machine*.

<sup>970</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>971</sup> Graham R., (2016), One of Us, Stars they’re just like us and the future of always- on celebrity coverage, *The Slate*, last seen 29 may 2019 <https://slate.com/human-interest/2016/09/the-invention-of-us-weeklys-stars-theyre-just-like-us-feature.html>

<sup>972</sup> Garber M. (2017), Why are they stars? Celebrities are celestial because of Shakespeare. And because of Chaucer. And because of the weird workings of the movie camera, *The Atlantic*, last seen 29 may 2019 <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/02/why-are-celebrities-known-as-stars/517674/>

<sup>973</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>974</sup> Ovidio, *Metamorphoses*

<sup>975</sup> Garber M. (2017), Why Are They 'Stars'? Celebrities are celestial because of Shakespeare. And because of Chaucer. And because of the weird workings of the movie camera, last seen 29 may 20019 <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/02/why-are-celebrities-known-as-stars/517674/>

<sup>976</sup> Shakespeare, quoted in Garber M. (2017), Why Are They 'Stars'? Celebrities are celestial because of Shakespeare. And because of Chaucer. And because of the weird workings of the movie camera, last seen 29 may 20019 <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/02/why-are-celebrities-known-as-stars/517674/>

<sup>977</sup> McCracken, G. (1986), Culture and consumption: A theoretical account of the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 71–84.

<sup>978</sup> Tanner, R. & Maeng, A. (2012), A tiger and a president: Imperceptible celebrity facial cues influence trust and preference, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39 (December), 769–783.

<sup>979</sup> McCracken, G. (1986), Culture and consumption: A theoretical account of the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 71–84.

endorsers.<sup>980</sup> In such roles, celebrities are tasked with attesting to the value of a given product, whether it be their own film or an item which they have been paid to endorse. These mechanisms, as will be duly addressed, function on the basis of celebrity appeal, attachment, and influence. As such, celebrities are understood to be inspirational figures and comparative referents,<sup>981</sup> who consumers are able to turn to in order to take decisions. Indeed, the power of celebrity is so great that for many individuals they represent a model from whom admirable traits are borrowed in the process of identity construction.<sup>982</sup> Beyond shaping identity, celebrities have been transposed into a modern pantheon in a largely secular society where stars are our heroes<sup>983</sup> and even our gods.<sup>984</sup>

In essence, celebrity can be considered to be a function of “well-knownness,”<sup>985</sup> in which an individual gains fame beyond a restricted field of industry.<sup>986</sup> This process of gaining visibility in the public consciousness is largely built upon narrative,<sup>987</sup> as celebrity is constructed by means of the stories told by and told about famous individuals in the media to an audience of fans and end-consumers.<sup>988</sup> “Stardom is an image of the way stars live (...) that combines the spectacular with the everyday, the special with the ordinary”<sup>989</sup> in a narrative which intermingles notions of ordinariness with extraordinariness. Implied within the narratives at the heart of the celebrity construction is the notion that stardom is not just produced internally by media industries, but in tandem with external mechanisms of audience participation in storytelling.<sup>990</sup> In addition, the central role of storytelling in processes of celebrity construction is also consistent with the argument that celebrities must somehow differentiate themselves from others in their field to achieve visibility by audiences.<sup>991</sup> In essence, as with influencers on social media, celebrities must establish points of differentiation<sup>992</sup> by which to separate themselves from the pack, and media coverage by which to broadcast a wide range of aspects about their lives,

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<sup>980</sup> Erdogan, B.Z. (1999), Celebrity endorsement: A literature review. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15, 291–314.

<sup>981</sup> Escalas Jennifer E., Bettman James R., (2005), “Self-Construal, reference groups, and brand meaning”, *Journal of Consumer Research* Vol.32, p. 378-389.

<sup>982</sup> Boon, S. D., & Lomore, C. D. (2001), Admirer-celebrity relationships among young adults: explaining perceptions of celebrity influence on identity. *Human Communication Research*, 27 (3), 432–465.

<sup>983</sup> Bromnick, R. D., & Swallow, B. L. (1999). I like being who I am: a study of young people’s ideals. *Educational Studies*, 25, 117–128.

<sup>984</sup> O’Guinn, T. (1991), *Touching greatness: The Central Midwest Barry Manilow Fan Club*, In *Highways and buyways: Naturalistic research from the consumer behavior odyssey*, edited by Russell W. Belk. Provo, UT, Association for Consumer Research.

<sup>985</sup> Boorstin, D. J. (1961), *The image*, Atheneum, New York.

<sup>986</sup> Turner, G. (2014). *Understanding Celebrity*. 2nd Edition, Sage, London.

<sup>987</sup> Escalas Jennifer E., Bettman James R., (2005), “Self-Construal, reference groups, and brand meaning”, *Journal of Consumer Research* Vol.32, p. 378-389.

<sup>988</sup> Fournier, S., Lee, L., (2009), Getting brand communities right, Embrace conflict, resist the urge to control, forget opinion leaders and build your brand, Harvard Business Review.

<sup>989</sup> Dyer, R. (1998), *Stars*. London: British Film Institute, p. 35

<sup>990</sup> Dyer, R. (2004), *Heavenly bodies: Film stars and society*. Psychology Press.

<sup>991</sup> Parmentier, M.-A., Fischer, E. & Reuber A. R. 2013. Positioning person brands in established organizational fields. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41 (3), 373–387.

<sup>992</sup> Lunardo R., Gergaud O., Livat F., (2015), Celebrities as human brands: An investigation of the effects of personality and time on celebrities' appeal, *Journal of Marketing Management*

from romance to fitness tips, has been proven to be an effective way of distinguishing themselves.<sup>993</sup> With the rise of mass media, and the increased access to celebrities brought about by the advent of social media, celebrity has become more attainable than ever before, even for everyday people, as was further addressed in Chapter 3.3.<sup>994</sup> For this reason, celebrity and the importance of narratives, must be disentangled from traditional notions of fame stemming from beauty, talent, accomplishments,<sup>995</sup> merit, or ability,<sup>996</sup> and one must ask: “in a world where the nobodies are somebodies, what makes a star a *star*?”

### 3.5.2 The Appeal of Celebrities

**“In the future everybody will be famous for fifteen minutes.”**

- Andy Warhol<sup>997</sup>

While there exists a dearth of research in the literature about what differentiates celebrities from the merely famous, there is much to be gleaned about consumer perceptions of celebrity from the literature on celebrities as brands.<sup>998</sup> Much of what we know to be essential to the construction of celebrity is rooted in the notion of appeal, which is often ill-defined as “presence” or “charisma,” a special *it* from which a kind of star-making magic, beyond logic and fully intuitive, radiates from a select few individuals.<sup>999</sup> Looking to the literature on brand personality<sup>1000</sup> in which it has been posited that celebrity appeal lies in personality, reveals the ways in which the personality of celebrities, and the dimensions which his or her personality take on, shapes celebrity appeal.<sup>1001</sup> In addition, celebrity appeal must also be considered by virtue of the temporal constraints of the so-called “celebrity-lifecycle” in which public appeal waxes and wanes based on the whims of the public.<sup>1002</sup> Celebrity appeal, as is such, must be understood to be personality based in essence and dynamic, as opposed to static, in audience perception.

As celebrities may be found in very different fields, ranging across the spectrum of medias in

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<sup>993</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>994</sup> McQuarrie, Edward; Miller, Jessica; Phillips, Barbara. “The Megaphone Effect: Taste and Audience in Fashion Blogging.” *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2013, pp. 136-58.

<sup>995</sup> Gabler, N. (1998). *Life, the movie: How entertainment conquered reality*. New York: Vintage Books.

<sup>996</sup> Gamson, J. (1994). *Claims to fame: Celebrity in contemporary America*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

<sup>997</sup> Andy Warhol (n.d) Quoted on *Phrases*. Accessed 30 April, 2019 <https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/fifteen-minutes-of-fame.html>

<sup>998</sup> Thomson P. (2008), “Chapter 4 – Field.” *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, edited by Michael Grenfell, Acumen Publishing Limited, pp. 67-81.

<sup>999</sup> Turner, G. (2014), *Understanding Celebrity*. 2nd Edition, Sage, London

<sup>1000</sup> Aaker, J.L. (1997), Dimensions of Brand Personality, *Journal of Marketing Research* 34, no. 3, pp.347–356.

<sup>1001</sup> Lunardo R., Gergaud O., Livat F., (2015), Celebrities as human brands: An investigation of the effects of personality and time on celebrities' appeal, *Journal of Marketing Management*

<sup>1002</sup> Ibidem.

contemporary society,<sup>1003</sup> celebrity appeal, as determined by personality, may be assessed differently in accordance to field. Thus, categorisation, referring to the complex set of preconceived information about a group of individuals,<sup>1004</sup> is necessary to properly identify determinants of celebrity appeal across cultural fields.<sup>1005</sup> Much to this point, research has shown that in social interaction episodes, categorisation is made on the basis of salient characteristics as a first step.<sup>1006</sup> Once this primary categorisation is made, recognisable features associated with the category are activated in the mind of the perceiver, who is then likely to employ these category-based expectations in judgements of the target.<sup>1007</sup> Consequently, when celebrities are assessed by the general public, first their salient attributes are appraised, such sophistication, sincerity, or rudeness, after which these attributes are ranked by category by virtue of the field to which the given individual belongs.<sup>1008</sup> Thus, the effects of personality on celebrity appeal must be assessed across fields, as a personal brands must “fit in” with the generally-held expectations of the field in which the celebrity is found.<sup>1009</sup> As generally-held expectations are an embodiment of shared values, celebrities, and the personality traits which they express, must be in accordance the values the field has come to expect.<sup>1010</sup> Ideally, they must be sincere,<sup>1011</sup> competent,<sup>1012</sup> exciting,<sup>1013</sup> sophisticated,<sup>1014</sup> and charmingly attractive,<sup>1015</sup> as when celebrities are perceived to possess these traits they tap into culturally-held values of exceptionalism that are highly influential.

However, even those celebrities who appear to have mastered the alchemy of appeal are subject to the ups and downs of stardom. As one star gains ascendancy, so too does another fade from sight. Given that celebrities are frequently understood to be heroes in the eyes of their adoring fans,<sup>1016</sup> their appeal may well continue to increase over time; nonetheless, just as often celebrities are interpreted as being nothing more than 'famous persons'<sup>1017</sup> whose appeal may ebb and flow with the tides of public opinion. Therefore, it can be states

<sup>1003</sup> Holmes, S. (2004), 'Reality goes pop!': Reality TV, popular music, and narratives of stardom in pop idol, *Television New Media*, 5 (2), pp. 147–171.

<sup>1004</sup> Lunardo R., Gergaud O., Livat F., (2015), Celebrities as human brands: An investigation of the effects of personality and time on celebrities' appeal, *Journal of Marketing Management*

<sup>1005</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1006</sup> (Macrae and Bodenhausen, 2001; Macrae, Bodenhausen and Milne, 1995)

<sup>1007</sup> Reinhard, A., Messner, M., & Sporer, S. L. (2006), Explicit persuasive intent and its impact on success at persuasion: The determining roles of attractiveness and likeableness, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 16 (3), pp. 249–259.

<sup>1008</sup> Lunardo R., Gergaud O., Livat F., (2015), Celebrities as human brands: An investigation of the effects of personality and time on celebrities' appeal, *Journal of Marketing Management*

<sup>1009</sup> Parmentier, M.-A., Fischer, E., Reuber A. R. (2013), Positioning person brands in established organizational fields, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41 (3), pp.373–387.

<sup>1010</sup> Lunardo R., Gergaud O., Livat F., (2015), Celebrities as human brands: An investigation of the effects of personality and time on celebrities' appeal, *Journal of Marketing Management*

<sup>1011</sup> Dyer, R. (2004). *Heavenly bodies: Film stars and society*. Psychology Press.

<sup>1012</sup> Parmentier, M.-A., Fischer, E. & Reuber A. R. (2013), Positioning person brands in established organizational fields. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41 (3), pp.373–387.

<sup>1013</sup> Lunardo R., Gergaud O., Livat F., (2015), Celebrities as human brands: An investigation of the effects of personality and time on celebrities' appeal, *Journal of Marketing Management*

<sup>1014</sup> Aaker, J.L. (1997), Dimensions of Brand Personality, *Journal of Marketing Research* 34, no. 3, pp.347–356.

<sup>1015</sup> Kamins, M. A. (1990), An Investigation into the match-up hypothesis in celebrity advertising: When beauty may be only skin deep, *Journal of Advertising*, 19, pp. 4–13.

<sup>1016</sup> Escalas Jennifer E., Bettman James R., (2005) Self-Construal, reference groups, and brand meaning, *Journal of Consumer Research* Vol.32, p. 378-389.

<sup>1017</sup> Shuart, J. (2007), Heroes in sport: Assessing celebrity endorser effectiveness, *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, 8 (2), p.

that appeal, taken as a dynamic metric of celebrity, is dependent upon the field in which the celebrity is present, in addition to other factors such as performance.<sup>1018</sup>

### 3.5.3 Brand Personality and Celebrities' Personalities

“Fame and fortune are as hard to find as a lightning strike.”  
- P. N. Elrod<sup>1019</sup>

By way of further explanation as to the mechanisms of celebrity personality which shape the creation of a celebrity brand, we turn to the dimensions of brand personality as identified in the literature:

*Sophistication*: as identified by Aaker,<sup>1020</sup> sophisticated brands are associated with perceptions of glamour, charm, and romance, implying that a sophisticated celebrity also possesses these highly-desirable traits. This particular dimension of personality is correlated with perceptions of physical attractiveness,<sup>1021</sup> which are understood to be predominantly positive in tone.<sup>1022</sup> Furthermore, individuals to whom more socially desirable personality traits are attributed, such as friendliness or sociability, are typically judged to be more attractive.<sup>1023</sup> These mechanisms go on to shape behavior,<sup>1024</sup> average earned income,<sup>1025</sup> and advertising effectiveness.<sup>1026</sup> Therefore, it can be posited that sophistication, with its broad range of associations, has a largely positive effect on celebrity brand appeal when present.

*Sincerity*: this second dimension is representative of the honest, everyday, salt-of-the-earth aspects of personality which are exhibited by some celebrity brands. As sincerity is seen as a sub-dimension of trust,<sup>1027</sup> and trust has been shown to exert positive effects on affect,<sup>1028</sup> “individuals who perceive celebrities as sincere may be likely to develop positive affect toward them and perceive them as appealing.”<sup>1029</sup> In addition, as

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<sup>128</sup>  
<sup>1018</sup> Lunardo R., Gergaud O., Livat F., (2015), Celebrities as human brands: An investigation of the effects of personality and time on celebrities' appeal, *Journal of Marketing Management*  
<sup>1019</sup> P. N. Elrod Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 31, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/p\\_n\\_elrod\\_743360](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/p_n_elrod_743360)  
<sup>1020</sup> Aaker, J.L. (1997), Dimensions of Brand Personality, *Journal of Marketing Research* 34, no. 3, pp.347–356.  
<sup>1021</sup> Cunningham, M.R., Barbee, A.P., & Pike, C.L. (1990), What do women want? Facialmetric assessment of multiple motives in the perception of male facial physical attractiveness, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59 (1), pp. 61–72.  
<sup>1022</sup> Hamermesh, D. S., & Biddle, J. E. (1994), Beauty and the labor market. *American Economic Review*, 84 (December), pp. 1174–94.  
<sup>1023</sup> Dion, K., Berscheid, E. & Walster, E. (1972), What is beautiful is good, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 24 (3), pp. 285–90.  
<sup>1024</sup> Andreoni, J., & Pétrie, R. (2008), Beauty, gender, and stereotypes: Evidence from laboratory experiments, *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 29 (February), pp. 73–93  
<sup>1025</sup> Gergaud, O., Ginsburgh, V. & Livat, F. (2012), Success of celebrities: talent, intelligence or beauty. *Economics Bulletin*, 32(4), pp.3120-3127.  
<sup>1026</sup> Baker, M.J., & Churchill, G.A. (1977), The impact of physically attractive models on advertising evaluations, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 14, 4, pp.538–555.  
<sup>1027</sup> Crosby, L. A., Evans, K. R. & Cowles, D. (1990), Relationship quality in services selling: An interpersonal influence perspective. *Journal of Marketing*, 54. Pp. 68–81.  
<sup>1028</sup> Chaudhuri, A. & Holbrook, M. B. (2001), The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: The role of brand loyalty, *Journal of Marketing*, pp.81–93.  
<sup>1029</sup> Lunardo R., Gergaud O., Livat F., (2015), Celebrities as human brands: An investigation of the effects of personality and time on celebrities' appeal, *Journal of Marketing Management*

insincerity has been shown to be detrimental in sales contexts,<sup>1030</sup> celebrities judged to be untruthful or deceptive in their motivations have a negative effect on perceptions of their brand personality.

*Warmth*: centred round notions of familiarity, friendliness, and kindness, perceptions of warmth include judgements made on sincerity<sup>1031</sup> and liking,<sup>1032</sup> inasmuch, the recognition of warmth in a celebrity's brand personality exerts a positive influence on audience's assessment of appeal.

*Competence*: judgments of competence are defined by the perception of reliability, intelligence, and success,<sup>1033</sup> along with the effective capacity to make change and achieve one's objectives.<sup>1034</sup> As has been argued, if the need for competence is fulfilled, intense attachments may result from the relationship between consumers and human brands.<sup>1035</sup> Hence, brands who are perceived as being competent, thus, fully meeting consumers' needs, are significantly more likely to form strong ties with consumers than brands who are perceived to be incompetent.<sup>1036</sup> In regards to celebrities, those who are judged to be competent in their given field have a heightened ability to forge strong attachments with their audiences.<sup>1037</sup>

*Excitement*: this dimension of celebrity-brand personality, which entails a sense of energy and activity, is typically judged as being valuable by the population at large.<sup>1038</sup> From mate selection<sup>1039</sup> to research on more everyday forms of interaction, excitingness is one of the most desirable characteristics for an individual to possess. As applied to the concept of celebrity, it can be broadly stated that the more excitement attributed to a celebrity, the more he or she will be perceived to be appealing.<sup>1040</sup>

*Ruggedness, or rudeness*: the final dimension of celebrity-brand personality, ruggedness harkens notions of toughness, masculinity, strength, and a certain rigidity of personality.<sup>1041</sup> Although, it should be noted that this

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<sup>1030</sup> Campbell, M. C., Inman, J. & Pieters, R., Duluth, MN : Association for Consumer Research, pp.37–40.

<sup>1031</sup> Judd, C. M., James-Hawkins, L., Yzerbyt, V., & Kashima, Y. (2005). Fundamental dimensions of social judgment: Understanding the relations between judgments of competence and warmth. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89 (December), 899-913

<sup>1032</sup> Barger, P. B., and Grandey, A. A. (2006). Service with a smile and encounter satisfaction: Emotional contagion and appraisal mechanisms. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 38, pp. 1229–1238

<sup>1033</sup> Mæhle, N., & Shneor, R. (2009), On congruence between brand and human personalities. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 19 (1), 44-53.

<sup>1034</sup> Cuddy, A. J. C, Fiske, S. T. & Glick, P. (2007). The BIAS map: Behaviors from intergroup affect and stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92 (April), 631-48.

<sup>1035</sup> Deci, E. L., & R. M. Ryan (2000). The 'what' and 'why' of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11 (4), 227–68.

<sup>1036</sup> Thomson, M. (2006). Human Brands: Investigating Antecedents to Consumers' Strong Attachments to Celebrities. *Journal of Marketing*, 70 (3), pp.104–119.

<sup>1037</sup> Lunardo R., Gergaud O., Livat F., (2015), Celebrities as human brands: An investigation of the effects of personality and time on celebrities' appeal, *Journal of Marketing Management*

<sup>1038</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1039</sup> Buss, D.M. & Barnes, M. (1986). Preferences in human mate selection. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50 (3), 559-570.

<sup>1040</sup> Lunardo R., Gergaud O., Livat F., (2015), Celebrities as human brands: An investigation of the effects of personality and time on celebrities' appeal, *Journal of Marketing Management*

<sup>1041</sup> Mæhle, N., & Shneor, R. (2009), On congruence between brand and human personalities. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 19 (1), 44-53.

dimension, like all dimensions, is affected by culturally shaped perceptions of personality, and may not be present in some contexts. Rather, ruggedness may be replaced with *rudeness*, referring to behaviour which is understood to be insensitive and evidence of a lack of regard or concern for others.<sup>1042</sup> Behaviour judged to be rude may include verbal or nonverbal actions which breach the norms of mutual respect, including sexist, racist, homophobic, or otherwise intolerant behaviour.<sup>1043</sup> One needs look no further than this week's tabloid to find a wide range of examples of celebrities' rude behaviour - and the public outcry, known as "cancelling"<sup>1044</sup> which often occurs on social media platforms today. From Bill Gates to Cristiano Ronaldo, Taylor Swift,<sup>1045</sup> and, frankly unsurprisingly, Kanye West,<sup>1046</sup> recent memory has seen the movement towards total disinvestment in celebrities deemed unacceptable, like Kanye, who suggested slavery was a choice.<sup>1047</sup> This movement towards holding celebrities to higher standards of accountability is illustrated by research in the respective fields of fairness and justice literature, which suggest that when rudeness or otherwise anti-social behaviour is observed, individuals may seek to punish the perpetrators.<sup>1048</sup> Inasmuch, rudeness may be understood to have a generally negative effect on the appeal scores of celebrities.<sup>1049</sup>

### 3.5.3 Brand Attachment Through Celebrity Endorsement

**“The need to believe in today's consumer brands can be compared to the need of  
the Ancient Greeks to believe in their own myths.”  
- G. Lewis<sup>1050</sup>**

One needs not look very far to find an example of a celebrity acting as an endorser for a product, as celebrity-brand relationships, in the form of endorsement, have become a remarkably common feature of today's marketplace.<sup>1051</sup> In some markets, as many as 20% of all advertisements feature a celebrity in some capacity, which has an enormous influence on all facets of public life within these markets, including consumer attitudes and perceptions. Moreover, owing to the multi-platform nature of communication channels in contemporary society, celebrities are increasingly lending their image and clout to multiple brands, in multiple different

<sup>1042</sup> Porath, C. L., & Erez, A. (2007), Does rudeness really matter? The effects of rudeness on task performance and helpfulness. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50 (5), pp. 1181–1197.

<sup>1043</sup> Porath, C. L., Macinnis, D., & Folkes, V. (2010), Witnessing incivility among employees: Effects on consumer anger and negative inferences about companies. *Journal of Consumer Research*, pp. 292–303

<sup>1044</sup> Bromwich J.E. (2018), Everyone is canceled It only takes one thing — and sometimes, nothing — for fans to dump a celebrity, last seen 20th may 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/28/style/is-it-canceled.html>

<sup>1045</sup> Taylor Swift is cancelled, TMZ TV (2018), last seen 29 may 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZ8lgIEMOQk>

<sup>1046</sup> Real Life Angel Twitter Account, last seen 29 may 2019 <https://twitter.com/aangelsimms/status/991514735421132800>

<sup>1047</sup> Kanye West Featuring Van Lathan (2018), Slavery was a Choice, [https://genius.com/Kanye-west-slavery-was-a-choice-pt-1-may-1-2018-annotated?referent\\_id=14468715#note-14468715](https://genius.com/Kanye-west-slavery-was-a-choice-pt-1-may-1-2018-annotated?referent_id=14468715#note-14468715)

<sup>1048</sup> O’Gorman, R., Wilson, D. S., & Miller, R. R. (2005), Altruistic punishing and helping differ in sensitivity to relatedness, friendship, and future interactions. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 26(5), pp.375–387.

<sup>1049</sup> Lunardo R., Gergaud O., Livat F., (2015), Celebrities as human brands: An investigation of the effects of personality and time on celebrities' appeal, *Journal of Marketing Management*

<sup>1050</sup> Lewis G. (1998), *L’ Odyssée des marques*, Paris.

<sup>1051</sup> Erdogan, B.Z.(1999), Celebrity endorsement: A literature review. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15, pp.291–314.

product categories,<sup>1052</sup> such as in the case of Cristiano Ronaldo<sup>1053</sup> and Chiara Ferragni<sup>1054</sup> as is further elaborated in Chapter Four. Indeed, it may even be argued that because celebrities in and of themselves are more often than not considered to be brands in their own right that may be “professionally managed and because they have additional associations and features of a brand.”<sup>1055</sup> In this sense, celebrities can be said to embody human brands to which relationships are formed by consumers.<sup>1056</sup>

As addressed previously in this section, much of the literature on celebrity endorsements centres round the influence which celebrities’ personalities have on endorsements and brand relationships. Research along these lines has tended to focus on concepts of familiarity,<sup>1057</sup> attractiveness,<sup>1058</sup> likeability,<sup>1059</sup> credibility, and expertise,<sup>1060</sup> or competence, and their influence on the effectiveness of celebrities as endorsers of products and brands. In addition, great strides have been made in the past decade in the field of consumer attachment,<sup>1061</sup> which has explored the manifold ways in which consumers begin to feel they have formed bonds with brands and with celebrities, as human brands, alike.<sup>1062</sup> Research into the attachment formed between individuals and celebrities has largely been guided by two foundational psychological theories, *Attachment Theory*<sup>1063</sup> and *Self-Determination Theory*,<sup>1064</sup> which are more fully addressed in Chapters 3.1 and 3.2 of this thesis. However, for the purpose of clarification, attachment theory may be defined as the premise that when strong attachments are formed between individuals and groups, elevated sensations of connection, affection, love, and passion are experienced.<sup>1065</sup> Whereas, self-determination theory is based on the notion that basic human needs are shaped in part by motivations stemming from the desire for autonomy, relatedness, and competence.<sup>1066</sup>

In regards to consumers’ relationship with celebrity spokespeople, it is unclear whether the relationship

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<sup>1052</sup> Ilicic J. , Cynthia M., Webster C. M., (2008), Attachment to Human Brands: Opinions of Celebrities Endorsing Multiple Brands, Macquarie University

<sup>1053</sup> Kim Kardashian’ s Instagram Account: <https://www.instagram.com/kimkardashian/?hl=en>

<sup>1054</sup> Chiara Ferragni’s Instagram Account: <https://www.instagram.com/chiaraferragni/?hl=en>

<sup>1055</sup> Thomson, P. (2006), “Chapter 4 – Field.” *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, edited by Michael Grenfell, Acumen Publishing Limited, 2008, p.105

<sup>1056</sup> Ilicic J. , Cynthia M., Webster C. M., (2008), Attachment to Human Brands: Opinions of Celebrities Endorsing Multiple Brands, Macquarie University

<sup>1057</sup> Misra, Shekhar and Sharon E. Beatty, (1990), Celebrity spokesperson and brand congruence: An assessment of recall and affect, *Journal of business research*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 159-173.

<sup>1058</sup> McGuire W.J. (1976) the concept of attitudes and their relation with behaviour. In H.W. Sinaiko & L.A. Broedling (Eds) perspectives on attitude assessment: Surveys and their alternatives, Champaign, IL: Pendleton

<sup>1059</sup> Erdogan, B.Z. (1999), Celebrity endorsement: A literature review. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15, pp. 291–314

<sup>1060</sup> Ohanian, R. (1990), Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 19 (3), pp. 39- 52.

<sup>1061</sup> Thomson, P. (2006), “Chapter 4 – Field.” *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, edited by Michael Grenfell, Acumen Publishing Limited, 2008, p.105

<sup>1062</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1063</sup> Bowlby, J., (1980), *Loss: Sadness and Depression*, New York: Basic Books.

<sup>1064</sup> La Guardia, J., Ryan, R. M., Couchman, C. E., Deci, E. L., (2000), Within-Person Variation in Security of Attachment: A self-determination theory perspective on attachment, need fulfilment, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79 (3), pp. 367-384.

<sup>1065</sup> Thomson, P. (2006), “Chapter 4 – Field.” *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, edited by Michael Grenfell, Acumen Publishing Limited, 2008, p.105

<sup>1066</sup> La Guardia, J., Ryan, R. M., Couchman, C. E., Deci, E. L., (2000), Within-Person Variation in Security of Attachment: A self-determination theory perspective on attachment, need fulfilment, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79 (3), pp. 367-384.

itself has significant influence over the effectiveness of celebrities as endorsers in a marketing context.<sup>1067</sup> While the literature in the field lags behind and has not yet adequately addressed the correlations between the creation of human brands and celebrity endorsement, there seems ample evidence to suggest, at this time, that “consumers’ opinions of a celebrity endorser are related to a number of celebrity characteristics, which in turn affect consumers’ attachment to the celebrity.”<sup>1068</sup>

In addition, a number of factors, including overexposure, lack of credibility, and unclear attribution, have been demonstrated to have a negative effect on consumer-celebrity attachment. For instance, while many celebrities currently lend their image to multiple brands in the form of celebrity endorsers, this has been found to be deleterious to their own personal brand image due to the effects of overexposure.<sup>1069</sup> These effects are compounded when a celebrity is perceived to be dishonest in some way, as is often seen in instances where a given celebrity endorses more than one brand. To better understand the effects of multi-product endorsements, *Attribution Theory*<sup>1070</sup> has often been applied, which posits that when celebrities are present as endorsers in advertisements, consumers attempt “to determine the causal reasons for a celebrity endorsing a product.”<sup>1071</sup> In such a scenario, consumers are understood to believe that celebrities endorse brands not just for financial gain, but also due to the fact that they actually believe in the brands that they are promoting.<sup>1072</sup> This belief works in tandem with mechanisms which depend on perceptions of expertise and credibility of an endorser. Thus, when celebrities are perceived to have expert knowledge of a subject, they are more persuasive<sup>1073</sup> and their endorsements are more likely to lead to purchase intentions in consumers.<sup>1074</sup> By applying these theories of consumer-human brand attachment, and how they are mediated by factors such as personality, a hypotheses for how to assess consumers’ opinions of celebrity endorsers emerges, as illustrated in the figure below.<sup>1075</sup>

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<sup>1067</sup> Ilicic J. , Cynthia M., Webster C. M., (2008), Attachment to Human Brands: Opinions of Celebrities Endorsing Multiple Brands, Macquarie University

<sup>1068</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1069</sup> Till B. et Al., (2008), Classical Conditioning and Celebrity Endorsers: An Examination of Belongingness and Resistance to Extinction Psychology & Marketing, Vol. 25(2), pp.179–196

<sup>1070</sup> Mowen, J. C., Brown, S. W., (1981) On Explaining and Predicting the Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsers. Advances in Consumer Research 8, pp. 437-441

<sup>1071</sup> Ibidem.

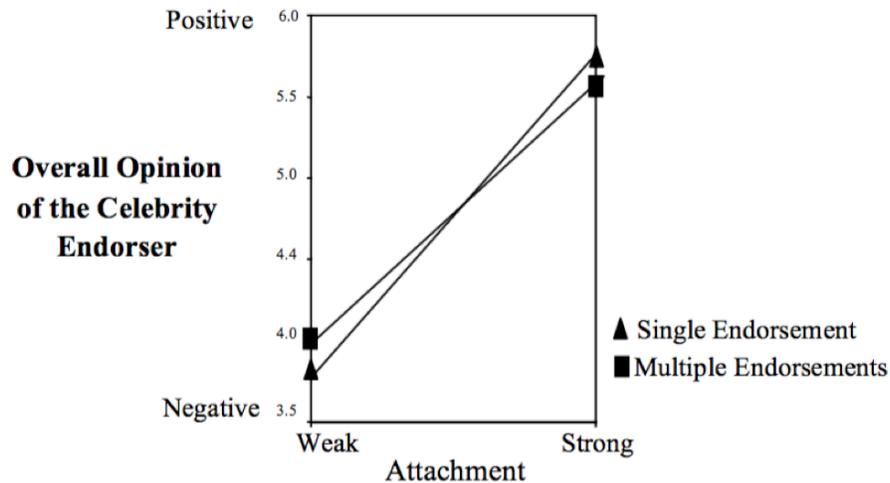
<sup>1072</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1073</sup> Aaker, D. A., Myers, J. G., (1987), Advertising Management, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., New Jersey: Prentice- Hall

<sup>1074</sup> Ohanian, R. (1990), Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 19 (3), pp. 39- 52

<sup>1075</sup> Ilicic J. , Cynthia M., Webster C. M., (2008), Attachment to Human Brands: Opinions of Celebrities Endorsing Multiple Brands, Macquarie University

**Figure 33. Overall Opinion of the Celebrity Endorser - (2019)**



For marketing practitioners, the need to identify and select the most efficacious endorsers for brands is a continuous challenge, which has only been compounded by the entry of non-celebrity endorsers, or influencers, to the field.<sup>1076</sup>

### 3.5.5 Celebrities as Human Brands

**“I think people love having a person behind a brand who lives it.  
The idea of storytelling is really important.”  
- Aerin Lauder<sup>1077</sup>**

As has been noted by Thomson amongst other, celebrities are often considered to be human brands in the eyes of consumers,<sup>1078</sup> as they are the subject of marketing, interpersonal, or inter-organisational communications.<sup>1079</sup> In addition, as celebrities may be perceived to be human brands,<sup>1080</sup> their appeal is judged on the basis of a brand personality-based framework, as previously addressed in this chapter. This is in large part due to

<sup>1076</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1077</sup> Aerin Lauder Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 31, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/aerin\\_lauder\\_613839](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/aerin_lauder_613839).

<sup>1078</sup> Thomson, P. (2006), “Chapter 4 – Field.” *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, edited by Michael Grenfell, Acumen Publishing Limited, 2008, p.105.

<sup>1079</sup> Parmentier, M.-A., Fischer, E. & Reuber A. R. (2013), Positioning person brands in established organizational fields. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41 (3), pp. 373–387.

<sup>1080</sup> Thomson, P. (2006), “Chapter 4 – Field.” *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, edited by Michael Grenfell, Acumen Publishing Limited, 2008, p.105.

mechanisms of anthropomorphism, in which humanistic characteristics are ascribed to non-human, or inanimate, entities such as brands.<sup>1081</sup> Working from this presupposition that celebrities are, in fact, human brands, it can be stated that:

*their performances on- and off- stage, off- and online, public or private, are marketing and branding exercises. Their everyday life choices and values are intrinsically private, but performed in public. These actions create brands and branding identities. Consequently, the human brand identities sell product brands through endorsements and persuasions by giving personality qualities to inanimate brands; and they encourage consumption through being an idealized consumer and a commodity vessel.*<sup>1082</sup>

For the purposes of this thesis, celebrities may be understood to be “any well-known persona who is the subject of marketing communication efforts,”<sup>1083</sup> their identities a product of a “multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals and as members of collectivities”<sup>1084</sup> in which celebrities are categorised as being something more than human.

It should be noted, however, that celebrities do not become brands simply by mere force of will or chance of fate. Rather, celebrity human brand identity is forged through a process of co-creation in which a variety of stakeholders in the process, including advertisers, press, talent management, broadcast networks, consumers/fans, and celebrities themselves,<sup>1085</sup> work in collaboration to develop a personal brand. This multi-sided project has been inexorably altered by the widespread adoption of social media networks, which have provided additional outlets for co-creation between fans and celebrities,<sup>1086</sup> in which celebrities have the heightened opportunity shape, revise, and negotiate their identities as human brands.<sup>1087</sup>

Inasmuch, celebrities use of social media channels may be seen as a response to the need for a reflexivity of identities in today’s society.<sup>1088</sup> This reflexivity, which is the creation of varied, dynamic images by means of the processes of human brand identity, are products of the post-modern dialogue on identity and self-identity.<sup>1089</sup> One such example of this phenomenon can be gleaned from the ways in which celebrity identity and brands are perceived to differ in the case of multiple endorsements.<sup>1090</sup> For instance, in a scenario where a celebrity endorses multiple brands or products, perceptions of his or her identity, and how his or her image, personality,

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<sup>1081</sup> Aggarwal, P., & McGill, A. L. (2007) Is that car smiling at me? Schema congruity as a basis for evaluating anthropomorphized products. *Journal of Consumer Research*, pp. 468–479.

<sup>1082</sup> Centeno, D., & Wang, J.J. (2016), Celebrities as human brands: An inquiry on stakeholder-actor co-creation of brand identities, *Journal of Business Research*.

<sup>1083</sup> Thomson, P. (2006), “Chapter 4 – Field.” *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, edited by Michael Grenfell, Acumen Publishing Limited, 2008, p.104

<sup>1084</sup> Jenkins, R. (2014). *Social identity*. Routledge, p. 5.

<sup>1085</sup> Centeno, D., & Wang, J.J. (2016), Celebrities as human brands: An inquiry on stakeholder-actor co-creation of brand identities, *Journal of Business Research*.

<sup>1086</sup> Centeno, D., & Wang, J.J. (2016), Celebrities as human brands: An inquiry on stakeholder-actor co-creation of brand identities, *Journal of Business Research*.

<sup>1087</sup> Boffard, R. (2014). “The value of celebrity endorsements”. BBC News Business. Retrieved February 3, 2016, from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-30392829>

<sup>1088</sup> Centeno, D., & Wang, J.J. (2016), Celebrities as human brands: An inquiry on stakeholder-actor co-creation of brand identities, *Journal of Business Research*.

<sup>1089</sup> Schroeder, J. E. (2005), The artist and the brand. *European Journal of Marketing*, 39, p.1291–1305

<sup>1090</sup> Centeno, D., & Wang, J.J. (2016), Celebrities as human brands: An inquiry on stakeholder-actor co-creation of brand identities, *Journal of Business Research*.

and values entailed within are viewed, are essentially contextual. However, while human brands are both contextual and reflexive, they typically remain stable, with an essential or core truth about a given celebrity's personality underpinning the many layers of perceived identity.

Moreover, as celebrities are generally believed to possess tangible cultural value, both through their work and their presence as an exceptional being in society, their work is also interpreted as being representations of their identity.<sup>1091</sup> As is such, celebrities are not mere representations of themselves, they are, instead personae with an elevated significance, both culturally and socially, in the world.<sup>1092</sup> They are our heroes and our villains; the objects of our affection and the stuff of our nightmares; they are somehow more than human, and somehow less than gods. By rendering themselves so omnipresent, while so untouchable at the same time, celebrities harness the power of human brands to translate words and images into relationships that deeply link consumer to brand, whether they be micro-celebrities, macro-celebrities, news celebrities, or insta-celebrities.<sup>1093</sup>

### 3.5.6 Celebrity Branding on Instagram

**“Reputations can be built, attacked, and destroyed on social media. It's a huge game-changer - instantaneously emboldening adversaries and shortening the ride for any corporate or personal brand.”**  
- Judy Smith<sup>1094</sup>

As the preeminent platform on which celebrity branding occurs today, Instagram has become a mecca for celebrities looking to refine their brand image, strengthen relationships with fans, and open channels of communication. Indeed, Instagram has become so popular for celebrities that three-quarters of top 100 profiles on the platform are owned by celebrity users.<sup>1095</sup> Typically, on a celebrity account, images from both public and private life are shared, ranging from self-promotion to the vagrities of everyday life. One is just as likely to see an Insta-celebrity such as Cristiano Ronaldo singing along to a song in his car as to receive information about his upcoming match,<sup>1096</sup> for example. As is such, Instagram can be argued to be conduit through which to catch a not-so-fleeting glimpse of a celebrity's lived experience, which has been shown to be instrumental in the construction of strong attachments between human brands and consumers.<sup>1097</sup> In today's dynamic social media

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<sup>1091</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1092</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1093</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1094</sup> Judy Smith Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 31, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/judy\\_smith\\_823192](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/judy_smith_823192)

Chicago Style Citation

<sup>1095</sup> Albergotti, R. (2014), Still growing inside Facebook, Instagram hits 300 million users. Wall Street Journal Digits Tech News and Analysis. available at: <http://blogs.wsj.com/digits/2014/12/10/still-growing-inside-facebook-instagram-hits-300-million-users/>, accessed May 2019

<sup>1096</sup> Cristiano Ronaldo Instagram Account <https://www.instagram.com/cristiano/?hl=en>

<sup>1097</sup> Victorzon (2014), Artist consumption in social media, original title in Swedish, Artistkonsumtion på sociala medier. Helsinki: Hanken School of Economics

landscape, celebrity branding on the platform is an obvious trend, not just as endorsers,<sup>1098</sup> but as brands in their own right as an extension of personal image.<sup>1099</sup>

As regards celebrity influence of Instagram, whereas upwards of 70% of millennial consumers report being influenced by their peers in consumption decisions, and 30% of those surveyed stated that they would be likely to buy a product recommended by a non-celebrity influencer, only 4.5% of respondents said they would be swayed by a celebrity endorsement in a digital context.<sup>1100</sup> As is such, especially in youth demographics, celebrities hold little influence over the purchase decisions of the majority of consumers. Moreover, a mere 3% of consumers claim to be influenced by celebrity endorsements in such scenarios.<sup>1101</sup> As addressed in the preceding section, influencers hold much greater influence in social media environments than celebrities, as traditionally understood. Rather, celebrities' presence on social media should be understood as activity in human brand creation and recreation, as opposed to a commercial endeavor in a conventional brand-endorser model.

## Conclusion

In the complex digital environment of Web 2.0, wherein social media platforms have flourished and new, influential stars have been introduced to the celebrity firmament, a wholly new conception of what constitutes a *brand* has emerged. To trace the roots of this phenomenon, one needs look no further than social media, which has proven a fertile ground for the development of *human brands*, either those embodied by celebrities as traditionally understood or by influencers - the new crop of contemporary culture and society's opinion leaders. Through careful analysis of the fundamental differences in personality, engagement, interaction, and influence above all else, a classification system reveals itself by which to separate those special few with the *power to influence* and the *influenced*. Celebrities, as the embodiment of human brands, and their influencer counterparts native to platforms such as Instagram, are the focus of Chapter Four, in which the differences between these rarified users and the bulk of average users as further dissected in reference to the mechanisms of narratives, in the form of both visual and verbal storytelling.

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<sup>1098</sup> Centeno, D., & Wang, J.J. (2016), Celebrities as human brands: An inquiry on stakeholder-actor co-creation of brand identities, Journal of Business Research

<sup>1099</sup> Kowalczyk, C., Royne, M. (2013), The Moderating Role of Celebrity Worship on Attitudes Toward Celebrity Brand Extensions. Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice 2, p. 211-220.

<sup>1100</sup> Collective Bias, Peers Have Influence Over Consumers, Celebrities Don't, last seen 15<sup>th</sup> may 2019

<https://www.collectivebias.com/blog/blog-2016-03-non-celebrity-influencers-drive-store-purchases>

<sup>1101</sup> Ibidem.

### *Celebrity Branding Content Strategies on Instagram*

**“For me it was always about sharing my life with people and seeing their reaction to it.**

**That was everything I ever wanted to do.”**

**- Chiara Ferragni,**

**Founder of The Blonde Salad and the Chiara Ferragni Collection**

#### **4.1 Introduction to Celebrity Branding Content Strategies on Instagram**

The cases presented in this chapter represent the means by which storytelling is employed by brands, including human brands, on social media platforms, specifically focussing on Instagram as a communications channel. In addition, through storytelling, such as is currently seen on Instagram, human brands intend to not only entertain their audiences, but seek recognition for their unique traits and in their efforts to convey finely-tuned messages about the individual and his or her experiences, image, values, and, identity. In turn, the stories which are told on such platforms serve as indices through which the public can better understand the expectations of the society in which they live and, thus, learn to better adapt to the society in which they belong through the examples set by opinion leaders in a given community.<sup>1102</sup> Therefore, it is argued that such narration is an essential conduit through which to make sense of contemporary culture and a society.<sup>1103</sup>

Of the brands analysed in this chapter, there exists a singular aspect held in common which ties them together, though, superficially, they seem to represent very different permutations of celebrity on Instagram. To this effect, the celebrity case studies selected as the focus of Chapter Four demonstrate how fame is leveraged on social media in service of the creation of human brands. While seemingly unrelated to one another, it is posited in Chapter Four that Chiara Ferragni and Cristiano Ronaldo are representative of human brands constructed through their respective social media presences, which has resulted in the identification of their individual identities with a distinctive, personal brand which is seen by the public to be representative of their *real essence*. Therefore, it may be said that a brand is born as a result of the fame and subsequent influence of an individual with whom it is associated through the transmission and ensuing consolidation of human brand identity by means of a communication strategy focussed on personal storytelling.

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<sup>1102</sup> Fontana A. (2016), *Storytelling d'impresa: la guida definitiva*, Hoepli Editore, Milano, p.59.

<sup>1103</sup> *Ibidem*.

### 4.1.1 Self-Storytelling, Brand Storytelling

“Visual storytelling utilizes both language and art to pass on the essence of who we are.”

- Debbie Millman<sup>1104</sup>

Within the contemporary content continuum, in which an incessant flow of content and information flows from user to user on multifarious digital platforms, brands whose identity are grounded in celebrity identity and image, notably Chiara Ferragni Collection and The Ferragnez for Chiara Ferragni and CR7 for Cristiano Ronaldo, are examined. Furthermore, it is these factors, it is argued, which has lead to the enormous commercial success of such brands which serve as the unifying principle for this chapter. Indeed, through close examination of such brands emerge a common thread which unites these figures: a strong communication strategy rooted in the telling of stories, at the heart of which is the practice of brandtelling, or the telling of a story of a person who is both an individual and a brand. These stories, which interweave self, experience, product, and identify contain within them their own distinctive cultural value and, as will be argued, are essential in the era of Web 2.0 marketing. Storytelling, thus, is an indispensable skill that is to be considered necessary for those who want to both listen and be heard.<sup>1105</sup> Moreover, beyond the innate human desire to speak and be heard, as will be demonstrated, the communication which is engaged in by influencers and celebrities alike on social media has a significant effect on the purchase intention, reputation, and brand awareness of audiences, while, at the same time, serves to expand the community of fans and followers of those who tell stories online.

In the modern era, where the use of digital marketing tools is inevitable and essential to achieve positive sales results, it is not possible to ignore the need of consumers to have more authentic and direct contact with brands. In other words, marketing based on static or constructed images, such as those on which traditional advertising is based, has become an inadequate tool. Rather, what is most appreciated by consumers in contemporary society is a narrative of authentic experiences, taken from moments of everyday life. To narrative these stories, brands and their representatives, have made significant use of influencers and celebrities on Instagram, and by leveraging their fame on the platform, have increased the relevance of the products associated with them. The visual content sharing platform, it is further argued, allows its users to share a glimpse of one’s lived experience, those moments which form the stuff of life, all while never forgetting that the purpose of such communication is to spread a story which is credible in the eyes of one’s audience. Inasmuch, storytelling on Instagram is understood to be a mechanism through which understanding is generated and interaction is instigated, involving the storyteller and storylisteners alike in the shaping of a narrative.<sup>1106</sup>

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<sup>1104</sup>Debbie Millman Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com, Retrieved May 27, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/debbie\\_millman\\_915813](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/debbie_millman_915813)

<sup>1105</sup> Fontana A. (2018), *Storie che incantano. Il lato narrativo dei brand*, Macerata, ROI Edizioni.

<sup>1106</sup> Giorgino F., Mazzù M.F. (2018), *BrandTelling*, Milano, Egea.

In addition to the creation of human brands through storytelling, another element which unites the brands examined is the endorser role undertaken by Ferragni and Ronaldo prior to the creation and sale of branded products by said parties. Indeed, as was addressed more thoroughly in Chapter Three, the role of celebrity endorser and that of a human brand, while they may be superficially similar, are distinct. Moreover, the stories that are told in service of both activities differ substantially, as they do to other forms of narrative; a difference which centres round the need: to demonstrate the distinctive personality of a brand; to engage with audiences; to involve and emotionally connect with consumers; and to arouse strong feelings, such as fear, happiness, surprise, and wonder, all whilst leveraging the values and ideals shared by its stakeholders. As is such, it is necessary for brands to tell stories with which their audiences may empathise, absorbing the values entailed within the narrative, all while experiencing the same sensations and emotions of the storyteller, leaving the story transformed by the act of narration.<sup>1107</sup>

In current consumption contexts, branding and marketing alike have been unilaterally shaped by the unavoidable influence of the storytelling economy, in which the goal is not just to sell a product, but to weave a story through the strategic usage of content designed to provoke an emotional response in audiences. The aim, therefore, of storytelling in the service of personal branding is not strictly financial, but the constant increase of possibilities. Possibilities which enchant, allowing narrative to forge links that lead consumers to believe they belong within the storyworld, increasing their willingness to invest both time and money in the story and the storyteller. Through the use of said content, whether it be in the form of text, images, videos, stories, branding activities are built and shared, and through which services, products and brands are proposed<sup>1108</sup> resulting in greater emotional empathy, a stronger sense of belonging, and, ideally, feeling of love between consumers and the consumed.

#### 4.2 Case One: From Influencer to CEO: Chiara Ferragni and the Chiara Ferragni Collection

“Personality, for me, is the strongest statement.”

- Chiara Ferragni<sup>1109</sup>

Over the course of the last decade, Chiara Ferragni has shown herself to be more than her barbie-like persona belies<sup>1110</sup> by transforming herself from a young law student *cum* fashion blogger in Milan into one of the most powerful opinion leaders in contemporary fashion and luxury sectors.<sup>1111</sup> Indeed, her trajectory from hobby

<sup>1107</sup> Vignali, D. (2019, gennaio 13). *Storytelling aziendale: cos'è e come può migliorare l'immagine del tuo brand*. <https://www.dariovignali.net/storytelling-aziendale-cose-e-come-puo-migliorare-limmagine-del-tuo-brand/>

<sup>1108</sup> Fontana A. (2018), *Storie che incantano. Il lato narrativo dei brand*, Macerata, ROI Edizioni.

<sup>1109</sup> Chiara Ferragni Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 25, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/chiara\\_ferragni\\_779541](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/chiara_ferragni_779541)

<sup>1110</sup> Financial Times(2019),Financial Times,Chiara Ferragni — the Italian influencer who built a global brand, last seen 20 may 2019 <https://www.ft.com/content/9adce87c-2879-11e9-a5ab-ff8ef2b976c7>

<sup>1111</sup> Ibidem.

blogger to being named one of the top 500 most influential figures in fashion by the Business of Fashion<sup>1112</sup> can hardly be defined as commonplace, and is, rather, quite exceptional within the context of fashion blogging. As a digital entrepreneur and influencer by practise and nomenclature, Ferragni is representative of the strength of personal branding and the power which is wielded by the best amongst the crop of modern fashion and lifestyle influencers on Instagram.<sup>1113</sup> As is noted by the researchers behind Harvard Business School's study of Ferragni, she has succeeded in creating a shoppable experience of narrative,<sup>1114</sup> through which she has differentiated herself from her competitors, securing her position as a leader in the field.<sup>1115</sup>

This position of influence on a global scale is not due simply to the size of her legions of followers, though it is vast by anyone's reckoning, but by Ferragni's ability to generate awareness and notoriety<sup>1116</sup> through the act of storytelling. To her 16.5 million followers at present count<sup>1117</sup> - or roughly the equivalent of the population of the Netherlands<sup>1118</sup> - Ferragni, the daughter of a novelist,<sup>1119</sup> can be seen to a storyteller *par excellence* who has enraptured her followers by offering more than just a glimpse into her life, from the everyday to the exceptional. Inasmuch, she may be understood to be an embodiment of the phenomenon of *affirmation* in influencer marketing,<sup>1120</sup> which has its roots in the identification of individuals who have influence on potential buyers. By shedding the elitist airs of the established fashion media and speaking directly to her audiences in the form of on-going narratives about her life as a businesswoman, mother, and wife, Ferragni has amassed millions of followers for her narrative, portioned out in an average of six posts a day.<sup>1121</sup>

#### 4.2.1 The Blonde Salad: A History of Influence

“Some loved me, some hated me - but they all followed me.”

- Chiara Ferragni<sup>1122</sup>

It has been 10 years since Ferragni begun writing her fashion blog, *The Blonde Salad*, whilst studying international law at Milan's Bocconi University,<sup>1123</sup> and in the interim the once-anonymous Italian blogger has been propelled to global stardom. The story of her ascent to being one of *Forbes* 30 most powerful people in the

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<sup>1112</sup> <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/bof500/2018>

<sup>1113</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1114</sup> Keinan A., Maslauskaitė K., Crener S., Dessain Vincent (2015), *The Blonde Salad*, Harvard Business School. <https://thehighville.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Caso-The-Blonde-Salad.pdf>

<sup>1115</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1116</sup> Launchmetrics (2019), *The State of Influencer Marketing: the Annual Report*, available on Launchmetrics.com

<sup>1117</sup> Chiara Ferragni Instagram Account: <https://www.instagram.com/chiaraFerragni/?hl=en>

<sup>1118</sup> Demography of the Netherlands, last seen 24 May 2019, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demography\\_of\\_the\\_Netherlands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demography_of_the_Netherlands)

<sup>1119</sup> The Blonde Salad Blog, Everything You need to know about the Blonde Salad New Talents, last seen 20 May 2019, <https://www.theblondesalad.com/en-EG/all-mag/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-blonde-salad-new-talents>

<sup>1120</sup> Eshuis, J., Klijn, E. & Braun, E. (2014). Marketing territorial et participation citoyenne : le *branding*, un moyen de faire face à la dimension émotionnelle de l'élaboration des politiques ?. *Revue Internationale des Sciences Administratives*, vol. 80(1), pp. 153-174.

<sup>1121</sup> Chiara Ferragni Instagram Account: <https://www.instagram.com/chiaraFerragni/?hl=en>

<sup>1122</sup> Chiara Ferragni Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 25, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/chiara\\_ferragni\\_779501](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/chiara_ferragni_779501)

<sup>1123</sup> Launchmetrics (2019), *The State of Influencer Marketing: the Annual Report*, available on Launchmetrics.com

world under 30,<sup>1124</sup> began as a 22-year-old student, posting photos of her outfits on the pioneering visual content site, Flickr.<sup>1125</sup> It is from this first foray onto the Internet, which took the form of a photo diary of her daily life, that the origins of the Chiara Ferragni brand are to be found.<sup>1126</sup> Delving into the prehistory of the Internet, to the dawn of social media, reveals of treasure trove of Ferragni's early attempts at content creation. Even in the early days of Flickr, Ferragni's images, which show her dressed in a combination of high and low end fashions - Chanel handbags and Zara pants, Gucci accessories and H&M shirts, for instance - offer insight into how she has established herself as a force to be reckoned with in the world of International fashion.

At that time, Ferragni, who was engaged to Riccardo Pozzoli, a finance student at Bocconi, first began to formulate her entry into the American market.<sup>1127</sup> Indeed, it was Pozzoli who first suggested to Ferragni that she ought to bring her incipient blog to social media and on a Sunday morning in 2009, in the midst of a Skype call, the two decided to start *The Blonde Salad*,<sup>1128</sup> intending it to be a hodge-podge of fashion, photography, travel and lifestyle, in the form of a visually compelling fashion blog.<sup>1129</sup> With a 510 euros investment from Pozzoli - 10 euros for the domain name and the other 500 for a camera - the blog was launched on 12 October 2009.<sup>1130</sup> Within a month, it had gained an average of 30,000 daily visitors.<sup>1131</sup>

The humble beginnings of Ferragni's self-styled blog, its name a tongue in cheek reference to the countless dumb blonde jokes associated with public figures such as herself,<sup>1132</sup> in which she posed for amateurish photo in smudged make-up and high-street fashions,<sup>1133</sup> were soon met with acceptance by Milan's fashion world. As little as three months after *The Blonde Salad* went live, Ferragni began to receive invitations industry events, such as Milan Fashion week. After which her presence in the international fashion world has steadily grown, resulting in the eventual creation of a business that generates upwards of €10 million a year at present, establishing Ferragni as one of the highest paid influencers on the Instagram today.<sup>1134</sup> However, at its inception, Ferragni's first company, TBS Crew S.r.l., which was founded in Cremona in March 2011, was not her sole endeavour. She, along with Pozzoli, founded the first iteration of *The Blonde Salad*, dividing ownership nearly evenly, with Ferragni owing 55%, and Pozzoli 45%; the former representing the creative talent, and the

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<sup>1124</sup> Forbes, (2015), "30 under 30 who are moving the world 2015." <http://www.forbes.com/sites/carolinehoward/2015/01/05/30-under-30-who-are-moving-the-world-2015/>

<sup>1125</sup> Launchmetrics (2019), The State of Influencer Marketing: the Annual Report, available on Launchmetrics.com

<sup>1126</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1127</sup> Ibidem

<sup>1128</sup> Ibidem

<sup>1129</sup> Forbes, (2015), "30 under 30 who are moving the world 2015." <http://www.forbes.com/sites/carolinehoward/2015/01/05/30-under-30-who-are-moving-the-world-2015/>

<sup>1130</sup> Ibidem

<sup>1131</sup> Ibidem

<sup>1132</sup> Launchmetrics (2019), The State of Influencer Marketing: the Annual Report, available on Launchmetrics.com

<sup>1133</sup> Garnsworthy J. (2015), How Things Change: 14 Major Fashion Bloggers' First-Ever Instagram Photos, last seen 24 May 2019, <https://stylecaster.com/fashion-bloggers-first-instagram/>

<sup>1134</sup> Waterhouse J. (2018), The 6 Highest Paid Fashion Bloggers on the Internet, last seen 22 May 2019, <https://www.harpersbazaar.com.au/fashion/highest-paid-fashion-bloggers-17513>

latter representing the business end of the operation.<sup>1135</sup> However, this state of affairs would not last for long, and in 2013, a mere two years after founding the company, the two-person team expanded, hiring new employees and moving from their makeshift office to their home in Milan.<sup>1136</sup>

It was at this point at which Ferragni first expressed a desire to become a celebrity, and set her designs on the creation of a collection of branded shoes and bags.<sup>1137</sup> While previous attempts at manufacturing a product to be sold alongside her blog posts had been met with failure, in 2013, the *Chiara Ferragni Collection* was reborn with Ferragni as creative director, and flanked by a trio of young designers, touting the merits of their all-Italian offerings.<sup>1138</sup>

However, despite the burgeoning success of Ferragni's first collection, 2013 also marked the decline of The Blonde Salad as audiences began their migration of social media platforms, such as Instagram, which gained widespread popularity in the first half of this decade.<sup>1139</sup> With the popularity of her blog falling quickly, Ferragni made the move to the platform, which she had joined the year prior. Her first post on the platform in January 2012, featuring a selfie of the blonde blogger and her dog,<sup>1140</sup> was rapidly followed by ever more sophisticated content resulting in the current state of affairs in which, after accumulating nearly 20,000 posts, Ferragni is one of the most well-known and highest paid figures of the platform.<sup>1141</sup> 2013 also marks the year in which she moved to Los Angeles in 2013, stating that the Milan stage had become "too small."<sup>1142</sup> Just as she had sought to differentiate herself by dyeing her naturally reddish-brown hair blonde, she too sought to separate herself from the pack of fellow fashion bloggers by internationalising herself, learning English and relocating to America in an attempt to give herself an advantage over her more parochial competitors.<sup>1143</sup>

It was not long after that *Forbes* named her in its "30 under 30" list of influential figures in the world of business in 2015.<sup>1144</sup> As a further sign of her acceptance as a mainstream figure in the corporate world, she was used by the Harvard Business School as a case-study on how the dual streams of a blog and a personal brand as a business may be monetised,<sup>1145</sup> a notion which had significantly lower traction in 2015 as compared to the state of marketing today. Following in the wake of mainstream recognition by the international media, Ferragni returned in Milan in 2016 triumphant as the world's most followed fashion blogger and lucrative endorsement

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<sup>1135</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1136</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1137</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1138</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1139</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1140</sup> Chiara Ferragni's post with Matilde last seen 30 May 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/htKZ8/>

<sup>1141</sup> Waterhouse J. (2018), The 6 Highest Paid Fashion Bloggers on the Internet, last seen 22 May 2019, <https://www.harpersbazaar.com.au/fashion/highest-paid-fashion-bloggers-17513>

<sup>1142</sup> Launchmetrics (2019), The State of Influencer Marketing: the Annual Report, available on Launchmetrics.com

<sup>1143</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1144</sup> Forbes, (2015), "30 under 30 who are moving the world 2015." <http://www.forbes.com/sites/carolinehoward/2015/01/05/30-under-30-who-are-moving-the-world-2015/>

<sup>1145</sup> Keinan A., Maslauskaitė K., Crener S., Dessain Vincent (2015), The Blonde Salad, Harvard Business School.

deals with some of the most important names in fashion.<sup>1146</sup>

#### 4.2.2 The Ascent of Chiara Ferragni as a Global Celebrity

**“Be patient - if something is supposed to happen, it's going to happen.  
Whenever I've tried to force things, they didn't go right.”  
- Chiara Ferragni<sup>1147</sup>**

As Ferragni’s popularity grew in this period, so too did the need to form a team to manage the Chiara Ferragni brand. As former business partner Pozzoli notes, “Very quickly Chiara emerged as an international celebrity and brands were willing to pay her for her presence.”<sup>1148</sup> Capitalising on her new-found fame, Pozzoli and Ferragni took the decision in 2013 to form a team exclusively devoted to managing her her celebrity and recruited an accountant, a public relations professional, and a project manager responsible for booking events, fashion shoots, interviews, and publicity.<sup>1149</sup> The team, which initially worked out of Ferragni and Pozzoli’s Milan home, dedicated themselves to shaping the public’s perception of Chiara Ferragni as a brand, while the face of the eponymous brand spent 90% of her time travelling in Asia, South America, the US, and Europe building her credibility as a globally recognised public figure.<sup>1150</sup> As Ferragni notes of this early period in her celebrity, “I would wake up at 6AM, get my makeup and hairstyle done, give an interview, shoot an editorial, go to an event, then go have a dinner with some designer, and get to bed way past midnight. It is an image kind of job.”<sup>1151</sup> Pozzoli, conversely, as the team’s business manager remained in Milan managing the growing team at The Blonde Salad, concerning himself with the daily business-related decisions related to the brand.<sup>1152</sup>

By early 2014, a year after Ferragni first left for America, she had already begun commanding fees ranging from \$30,000 to \$50,000 USD for her participation in fashion industry events, such was the power of her celebrity at that point.<sup>1153</sup> She was, at that point already,

*the most popular blogger globally in terms of her daily followers and no other blogger in the world has the same geographic spread of audience. That aside, she has also become a real star in the fashion*

<sup>1146</sup> Financial Times(2019),Financial Times,Chiara Ferragni — the Italian influencer who built a global brand, last seen 20 may 2019  
<https://www.ft.com/content/9adce87c-2879-11e9-a5ab-ff8ef2b976c7>

<sup>1147</sup> Chiara Ferragni Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 25, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site:  
[https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/chiara\\_ferragni\\_779551](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/chiara_ferragni_779551)

<sup>1148</sup> Financial Times(2019), Financial Times,Chiara Ferragni — the Italian influencer who built a global brand, last seen 20 may 2019  
<https://www.ft.com/content/9adce87c-2879-11e9-a5ab-ff8ef2b976c7>

<sup>1149</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1150</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1151</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1152</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1153</sup> Ibidem.

*press. If you buy 20 fashion magazines today, half of them will feature news on Chiara. Nobody else, except for several top models, has got such coverage.*<sup>1154</sup>

Indeed, in the first quarter of 2015, before being named as one of Forbes most powerful figures, Ferragni had already been featured on the cover of international issues of leading fashion and women's interest magazines, such as Grazia, Vogue, Lucky, Instyle, and Marie Claire.<sup>1155</sup> This jump in visibility, placing Ferragni amongst the ranks of international celebrity, was a turning point in her career. Shedding the constraints of her online fashion blogger status, Ferragni transformed herself in this period into a mainstream figure with recognisable star power, as it were. Though Ferragni sees things differently, "I still don't call myself a celebrity. It's such a different profession and such a different job than just being a blogger," Ferragni has stated "But I would like to do even more work as a celebrity in the future. It allows me to live fully my passions for travel, lifestyle, and fashion altogether."<sup>1156</sup>

This assessment of her celebrity is echoed by Sabina Belli, chief executive of jewellery brand Pomellato which has collaborated with Ferragni in the past, who has stated that "Chiara speaks directly to the digital generation,"<sup>1157</sup> allowing her to find a common language through storytelling which has connected her will millions of followers round the world.<sup>1158</sup> It is this ability to reach her audience which has lead to her ascent within the world of fashion's elite; however, not everyone within the industry is so complimentary, with criticism ranging from "I doubt she has real substance," to "I don't think anyone sees her as cool. She is mainstream. For a brand that is not just trying to sell handbags she is not the right kind of person."<sup>1159</sup> As will be elaborated in the proceeding section, despite naysayers, today Ferragni, following her recent marriage to Italian rapper Fedez, is a superbrand in her own right.

### 4.2.3 The Chiara Ferragni Brand Today

**"Going to meet Chiara Ferragni, social media meteorite, is like going to see the queen of a small realm. In fact, not so small a realm."**<sup>1160</sup>

Chiara Ferragni, as previously discussed, has risen from the rank of anonymous fashion blogger to "social media meteorite" in the decade following her first blog, *The Blonde Salad*, and with her recent marriage, the scope of her influence has only seemed to grow ever larger. Indeed, it was her three day nuptial celebration to the Italian rapper, which "generated a total audience-driven Media Impact Value of \$36 million across online

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<sup>1154</sup> Financial Times(2019), Financial Times, Chiara Ferragni — the Italian influencer who built a global brand, last seen 20 may 2019  
<https://www.ft.com/content/9adce87c-2879-11e9-a5ab-ft8ef2b976c7>

<sup>1155</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1156</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1157</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1158</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1159</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1160</sup> Financial Times(2019), Financial Times, Chiara Ferragni — the Italian influencer who built a global brand, last seen 20 may 2019  
<https://www.ft.com/content/9adce87c-2879-11e9-a5ab-ft8ef2b976c7>

and social, and sparked over 67 million interactions (a.k.a engagement). #TheFerragnez generated over \$8 million in MIVTM for brands”<sup>1161</sup> which has tipped the scales in the direction of international stardom. Together the celebrity couple, and their combined 25 million followers, have the ears of a population equivalent to the size of Australia - a vast platform by anyone’s standards.<sup>1162</sup> Of Ferragni’s 16 million followers,<sup>1163</sup> three-quarters of which are located in Europe, primarily Italy where Ferragni has centred her operations since 2016, followed by France, Russia, and, finally, Spain, concentrating her global influence in the European market.<sup>1164</sup> An additional 15% of her followers can be found in Asia, and the remaining 10% constitute her American followers.<sup>1165</sup> However, when Ferragni’s number of followers is analysed in terms of quality follows, that number drops to roughly 11.6 million potentially real fans, based on quality engagement, which totalled 244,491 comments and posts as of March 2019.<sup>1166</sup> This ranks Ferragni as one of the most well-known figures in the world of fashion on Instagram, and, indeed, by some estimates she is within the top 30 most highly paid figures on the platform, commanding nearly 20 thousand USD per post.<sup>1167</sup>

In addition to her revenue from online endorsement deals with brands such as Lancôme, Dior, and Intimissimi, Chiara Ferragni as a brand, which generates upwards of 8 million USD annually,<sup>1168</sup> financial strength primarily originates from her fashion line, Chiara Ferragni Collection.<sup>1169</sup> The line, which is focussed on clothing and accessories, was launched in 2010, with flagship stores in Milan, Paris, and Shanghai, pop-up stores in major department stores worldwide, and a dedicated online site to manage the digital flow of shoppers. Of the reported €30 million euros in combined revenues stemming from her modelling and endorsement deals combined with her retail site, the single largest revenue stream flows from The Chiara Ferragni Collection.<sup>1170</sup> The collection, which is sold in more than than 300 stores worldwide today is comprised of footwear, backpacks, bomber jackets, sweatshirts and T-shirts, among other items, the vast majority of which are embellished with either the bloggers signature winking eye logo or her initials.<sup>1171</sup> In addition to the strength of the brand in already established locations, as was first reported in 2017, this year Ferragni, in a deal with Riqing Group, has set her sights on fast-tracking growth in China, where 14 flagships will be opened by year end, with

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<sup>1161</sup> Launchmetrics (2019),The State of Influencer Marketing: the Annual Report, available on Launchmetrics.com

<sup>1162</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1163</sup> Statista Portal, Key figures of influencer Chiara Ferragni's presence on Instagram as of April 2019\*, Last seen 20 may 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/910708/key-figures-of-chiara-ferragni-s-presence-on-instagram/>

<sup>1164</sup> Launchmetrics (2019),The State of Influencer Marketing: the Annual Report, available on Launchmetrics.com

<sup>1165</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1166</sup> Statista Portal, Key figures of influencer Chiara Ferragni's presence on Instagram as of April 2019\*, Last seen 20 may 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/910708/key-figures-of-chiara-ferragni-s-presence-on-instagram/>

<sup>1167</sup> Hopper (2018),Instagram Rich List, last seen 26 May 2019, <https://www.hopperhq.com/blog/instagram-rich-list/>

<sup>1168</sup> Waterhouse J. (2018),The 6 Highest Paid Fashion Bloggers on the Internet, last seen 26 May 2019, <https://www.harpersbazaar.com.au/fashion/highest-paid-fashion-bloggers-17513>

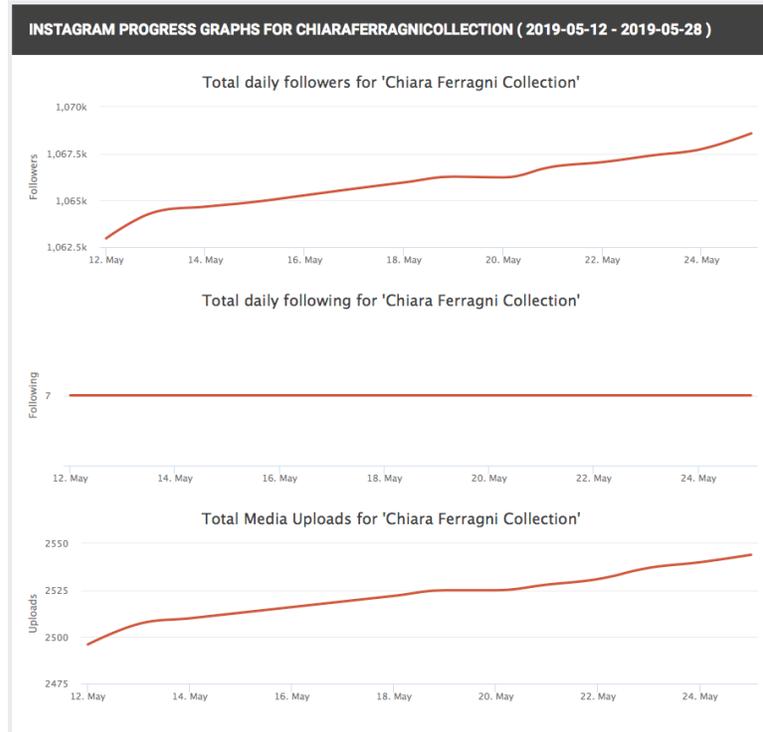
<sup>1169</sup> Legend, (2017)Chiara Ferragni is now CEO and president of The Blonde Salad <https://hashtaglegend.com/post/chiara-ferragni-ceo-and-president-blonde-salad>

<sup>1170</sup> Financial Times(2019),Financial Times,Chiara Ferragni — the Italian influencer who built a global brand, last seen 20 may 2019 <https://www.ft.com/content/9adce87c-2879-11e9-a5ab-f8ef2b976c7>

<sup>1171</sup> Keinan A., Maslauskaitė K., Crener S., Dessain Vincent (2015), The Blonde Salad, Harvard Business School.

an additional 35 other brick-and-mortar locations to follow in the near future.<sup>1172</sup> This comes on the heels of numerous pop-ups and collaborations with key retailers including Level Shoes in Dubai, LuisaViaRoma in Florence, IT Hong Kong, Le Bon Marché in Paris, Saks Fifth Avenue in New York and others.<sup>1173</sup>

**Figure 31. Instagram Progress Graph for Chiara Ferragni Collection - Blade.com (2019)**



<sup>1172</sup> Abel K. (2017), Chiara Ferragni Collection inked a deal with Riqing Group to fast track growth in China and they plan to open 35 stores there in the next few years, last seen 26 May 2019,

<https://wwd.com/business-news/retail/the-blonde-salads-chiara-ferragni-sets-retail-expansion-10998922/>

<sup>1173</sup> Ibidem.

#### 4.2.4 The Chiara Ferragni Collection

**“I’ve never done fashion school or anything like that. But I have good instincts.”**

**- Chiara Ferragni<sup>1174</sup>**

Initially, Ferragni, who is well-known for her extensive collection of designer accessories,<sup>1175</sup> had toyed with the concept of creating a limited capsule collection that would become a brand of her own.<sup>1176</sup> As Ferragni remarked, “I have always been fascinated by the bag and the shoe world more than any other accessories, but I also thought that it might be perfectly fine to have one or two bags in one's wardrobe as they are more universal – and I felt that I would always prefer an iconic Chanel or Hermès bag to my own!”<sup>1177</sup> As the businesswoman notes, she believed she would have more opportunities by focussing on shoes alone, she explains: “I love so many different shoe designers and shoe styles. Sometimes I go to a vintage market and I buy vintage shoes, and I love them more than any other designer shoes. And shoes change so much: you have party shoes, daily shoes, work shoes, holiday shoes... everybody buys new shoes once in a while.”<sup>1178</sup> This initial foray into the world of shoe design was met with failure, however, due to poor choice in manufacturer.<sup>1179</sup> Ferragni and her business partner at the time, Pozzoli, had been approached by an Italian footwear producer in early 2011 to begin her eponymous collection, however the pair soon realised that the manufacturer was unable to fabricate her designs, this, in addition to distribution and quality issues, would lead to the faltering of the brand shortly after its launch in 2013.<sup>1180</sup>

With the licensing agreement with their manufacturer about to expire in the same year, Ferragni and Pozzoli regrouped and took the decision to concentrate the bulk of their efforts on the construction of a strong brand of their own, backed by a legitimate business.<sup>1181</sup> To this aim, Pozzoli sought out the angel investor, Paolo Barletta, who then provided the initial €500,000 needed to overhaul the brand, resulting the spring 2013 relaunch of the *Chiara Ferragni Collection*, now owned by Ferragni, Pozzoli, Barletta, and sales manager Lorenzo Barindelli.<sup>1182</sup> Under the terms of the newly developed licensing agreement, the Chiara Ferragni Collection received 10% of revenue in royalties, rendering the agreement a hybrid royalty scheme, with control over design secured in the hands of Ferragni’s team in exchange for the majority of profits being directed back into the Italian manufacturer’s coffers.<sup>1183</sup> By year end, the collection had generated €500,000 revenue in a

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<sup>1174</sup> Chiara Ferragni Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/chiara\\_ferragni\\_779526](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/chiara_ferragni_779526)

<sup>1175</sup> Who What Wear (2018) Chiara Ferragni’s Handbag Closet. Accessed 30 May 2019, <https://www.whowhatwear.co.uk/chiara-ferragni-handbag-closet>

<sup>1176</sup> Keinan A., Maslauskaitė K., Crener S., Dessain Vincent (2015), *The Blonde Salad*, Harvard Business School.

<sup>1177</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1178</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1179</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1180</sup> Keinan A., Maslauskaitė K., Crener S., Dessain Vincent (2015), *The Blonde Salad*, Harvard Business School.

<sup>1181</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1182</sup> Ibidem

<sup>1183</sup> Ibidem

mere five months - a figure which would grow exponentially in the coming years.<sup>1184</sup> Indeed, by 2014, one year after the reformulated brand was launched, profits reached €4 million euros annually, with a little under €200,000 euros generated from the online site in sales within the first six months.<sup>1185</sup>

The growth which the Chiara Ferragni Collection experienced in 2013/2014, notably, coincides with the decline of *The Blonde Salad* blog, as previously elaborated. Facing the migration of her followers *en masse* to social media networks, in particular Instagram, 2013 became a “turning point”<sup>1186</sup> for the brand, as notes Pozzoli. In response to falling numbers on the blog, Ferragni began to link her Instagram account with content posted on *The Blonde Salad* site, and despite shuffling her audience from her blog to Instagram profile, the platform has had an overwhelmingly positive impact on the overall strength of Ferragni’s business.<sup>1187</sup> In reference to the visual content sharing platform, Ferragni has said,

*an Instagram profile is something that everybody has now. Individuals have it, companies have it, celebrities have it, and people can easily see the difference in numbers: Kim Kardashian has 139 million followers, and their neighbor has 200 followers. People who have never even heard of me can now type my name on Instagram and check that I have 3 million followers, and instantly they assume that I must be someone famous. Companies understand the value of that.*<sup>1188</sup>

Capitalising on her fame on the platform, Ferragni has worked steadily to build her brand, while at the same time, attempting to dissociate it from her celebrity, so that the brand will continue to function not just on the basis of her stardom, but on the merits of the product, distribution network, collaboration with designers, and advertising.<sup>1189</sup>

One such example of collaboration with well-established designer includes Ferragni’s recently announced branded line with Lancôme.<sup>1190</sup> The capsule collection, which features lipsticks, eyeshadow, mascara, and a palette bearing Ferragni’s signature eye logo, was released in May 2019 and marks her transition into the beauty market.<sup>1191</sup> In her previous brand collaborations the blogger has exclusively partnered with brands in the apparel and accessories industry, such as Converse,<sup>1192</sup> Levi’s,<sup>1193</sup> and Disney.<sup>1194</sup> This newest collaboration with the French beauty giant, Ferragni states is evidence of her continued dialogue with an ever

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<sup>1184</sup> Ibidem

<sup>1185</sup> Ibidem

<sup>1186</sup> Ibidem

<sup>1187</sup> Ibidem

<sup>1188</sup> Keinan A., Maslauskaitė K., Crener S., Dessain Vincent (2015), *The Blonde Salad*, Harvard Business School.

<sup>1189</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1190</sup> Ignazzi C. (2019), Chiara Ferragni lancia una linea make up per Lancôme, ma è polemica sul prezzo, last seen 30 May 2019, [https://www.ilmessaggero.it/moda/news/chiara\\_ferragni\\_lancome\\_beauty\\_ultime\\_notizie-4519441.html](https://www.ilmessaggero.it/moda/news/chiara_ferragni_lancome_beauty_ultime_notizie-4519441.html)

<sup>1191</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1192</sup> Cipolla G.C. (2018), Chiara Ferragni e Converse insieme per una capsule collection “brillante”, last seen 30 May 2019 [https://www.ilmattino.it/moda/stilisti/chiara\\_ferragni\\_converse\\_insieme\\_capsule\\_collection\\_brillante-4094121.html](https://www.ilmattino.it/moda/stilisti/chiara_ferragni_converse_insieme_capsule_collection_brillante-4094121.html)

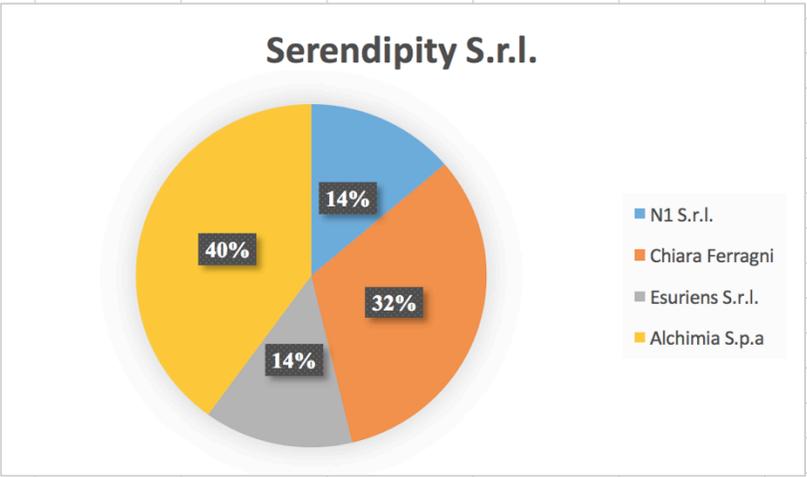
<sup>1193</sup> Collezioni, Levis , Chiara Ferragni Capsule Collection, last seen 30 May 2019, <https://www.collezioni.info/en/levis-chiara-ferragni-capsule-collection/>

<sup>1194</sup> Waller W.(2018), Exclusive, Chiara Ferragni to Partner With Shop Disney on Capsule Shoe Collection, last seen 28 May 2019, <https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/exclusive-chiara-ferragni-partner-with-shopdisney-on-capsule-collection-of-shoes-1202642651/>

growing pool of consumers, in which she hopes to foster values of empowerment, achievement, and independence, as is shown in the following quote: “We worked on a product and communication that is relevant for the girls of my generation. Flirty, inspiring and fun are the three key words of this empowering project. I deeply believe that makeup is a huge weapon to feel better with yourself, to face your everyday challenges and to achieve your goals [fiercely].”<sup>1195</sup> The launch of her branded collaborated with the French cosmetics firm has been widely promoted in posts on Instagram, as well as on IG Stories and IG TV, reaching upwards of 17.6 thousand users in less than a week. In turn, the capsule collection further reinforces Ferragni’s brand values and identity, tying her entry to the beauty industry to her preexisting human brand and fashion brand, The Chiara Ferragni collection, further solidifying her already strong position in the field. To this effect, according to the MIV, the collection founded by the Italian digital entrepreneur, positioned third for research volume, dominated the first quarter of 2019 with a MIV of \$ 10.9M, made for 94.8% on social media thanks to the support of the different brand account.<sup>1196</sup>

To better contextualise Ferragni’s latest success, we turn to a key figures representation of the financial health of The Chiara Ferragni Collection.

**Figure 35. Serendipity S.r.l - Serendipity (2017)**



The 2017 financial statements of Serendipity Srl, which owns the Chiara Ferragni Collection, produced a net profit of € 272,965. Revenues from sales and services amounted to € 1,685,286 in 2017 as compared to the

<sup>1195</sup> Salibian S. (2019), Chiara Ferragni Partners With Lancôme for Makeup Capsule Collection, The range launched exclusively on Douglas.it., last seen 30 May 2019, <https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/chiara-ferragni-lancome-beauty-capsule-collection-1203140696/>

<sup>1196</sup> Launchmetrics (2019), The State of Influencer Marketing: the Annual Report, available on Launchmetrics.com

previous year which was € 1,443,774, so it is possible to state that there was a substantial increase in revenue, as is shown in the graph below :

**Figure 36. Income From Sales, Chiara Ferragni Collection - (2017)**



The revenue recorded in financial statements, on a basis basis of returns, on vouchers, discounts and premiums, as well as taxes directly related to them, are calculated below. Revenue deriving from the provision of services are recorded when the service is rendered. In the particular case of continuous services, the relative revenues are recorded for the amount accrued.

**Figure 37. Total Production Value of Serendipity Co. Ltd. - (2017)**

TOTAL PRODUCTION VALUE OF SERENDIPITY Co. Ltd.				
Description	Details	Total Amount	Italy	Other European Countries
Revenue generated from sales				
	Royalties from trade marks	1,523,355	1,523,355	
	Services	42,062	42,062	
	Services rendered in EU	119,869	-	119,869
	Total	1,685,286	1,565,417	119,869

To better understand the success of the Chiara Ferragni Collection, a SWOT analysis is presented in the figure below:

**Figure 38. SWOT Analysis of Chiara Ferragni and the Chiara Ferragni Collection - Personal Elaboration of the Author (2019)**

<p><b><u>STRENGTHS</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong social media follower base</li> <li>-Popularity of founder, Chiara Ferragni</li> <li>-Unique and original designs</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>WEAKNESSES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Low brand awareness</li> <li>-Lack of product diversity</li> <li>-Weak brand credibility</li> <li>-Few retail channels</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>OPPORTUNITIES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increasing demand for customization</li> <li>-Brand Identity intensification</li> <li>-Increased budget and resources to take the brand to the next level</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>THREATS</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Too many emerging fashion brands</li> <li>-Decrease in Chiara Ferragni's popularity</li> <li>-Moderation of blogger's importance and influence in the</li> </ul>

Today, Chiara Ferragni Collection is one the most searched for new Italian brands online, bested only by Palm Angels and GCDS in terms of search queries performed in 2018;<sup>1197</sup> however, when accounting for “buzz,” that ill-defined something special which keeps people talking, of the three, it is the Chiara Ferragni Collection which has generated the most buzz in the first quarter of 2019.<sup>1198</sup> This is due in large part to the continued online presence of Ferragni, as both the spokeswoman and face of the brand on Instagram, who registered a media impact value of \$10.9 million and 94.8% in 2018.<sup>1199</sup> Ferragni, the newly named ambassador of the LVMH Prize, which lends her a much desired credibility in the industry, hopes to continue the trajectory of the brand’s growth by improving the quality of her designs by hiring outside talent from prominent, streetwear fashion house, such as the much-hyped Off-White label,<sup>1200</sup> which was founded by Louis Vuitton’s artistic director.<sup>1201</sup>

This reinforcing of the brand’s credibility is an element of Ferragni’s strategy to cede control of the brand’s image and everyday operations to those within her team. “I am trying to evolve the brand that will go ahead by itself without my continuous support,” Ferragni states “I want to be more behind the scenes. And that people will like it because they like the product.”<sup>1202</sup> This is in line with the business model of another millennial-influencer turned businesswoman, who Ferragni is noted to emulate, Emily Weiss, the founder and chief executive of beauty brand Into the Gloss.<sup>1203</sup> It also ties into the model developed by Kim Kardashian West, in which more and more family members have been incorporated into the Ferragni brand. As previously noted, Ferragni’s wedding to Italian rapper Fedez which was watched by a global audience of 67 million,<sup>1204</sup> and the creation of The Ferrangez brand, marked her introduction to the rarified heights of celebrity on Instagram. In addition to her husband and son, her younger sisters Valentina, who has 2.4m Instagram followers, and Francesca, who has a further 728k followers, and her mother Marina, with a respective 380k followers, have expanded Ferragni’s audience to the size of a nation larger than that of Australia.<sup>1205</sup>

<sup>1197</sup> Launchmetrics (2019),The State of Influencer Marketing: the Annual Report, available on Launchmetrics.com

<sup>1198</sup> Salibian S. (2018),Chiara Ferragni Collection Opens Parisian Flagship, After opening in Milan, Shanghai and Chengdu the influencer/entrepreneur’s namesake label unveils its first outpost in Paris, Last Seen 29 May 2019,

<https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/chiara-ferragni-collection-opens-parisian-flagship-1202895761/>

<sup>1199</sup> Meliado E. (2019),Palm Angels, GCDS e Chiara Ferragni Collection le giovani insegne più “hot” del trimestre <https://it.fashionnetwork.com/news/Palm-Angels-GCDS-e-Chiara-Ferragni-Collection-le-giovani-insegne-piu-hot-del-trimestre,1089845.html#.XOpTwdMzbMI>

<sup>1200</sup> Keinan A., Maslauskaitė K., Crener S., Dessain Vincent (2015), The Blonde Salad, Harvard Business School.

<sup>1201</sup> Kaitlyn T. (2018),The hottest fashion brand in the world was built on irony and \$1,000 sweatshirts, And Rihanna and Kanye and A\$AP Rocky, Last seen 29 May 2019, <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2018/10/30/18027074/off-white-timeline-history-luxury-streetwear-irish-abloh>

<sup>1202</sup> Financial Times(2019),Financial Times,Chiara Ferragni — the Italian influencer who built a global brand, last seen 20 may 2019

<https://www.ft.com/content/9adce87c-2879-11e9-a5ab-ff8ef2b976c7>

<sup>1203</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1204</sup> De Klerk A. (2018),Was Chiara Ferragni's wedding gown more influential than Meghan Markle's?There were 67 million interactions on Instagram about the Italian nuptials, last seen 28 May 2019,

<https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/bazaar-brides/a23002827/chiara-ferragnis-wedding-gown-more-influential-than-meghan-markles/>

<sup>1205</sup> Financial Times(2019),Financial Times,Chiara Ferragni — the Italian influencer who built a global brand, last seen 20 may 2019

<https://www.ft.com/content/9adce87c-2879-11e9-a5ab-ff8ef2b976c7>

#### 4.2.5 Seriality and Narrative: Theories on the Chiara Ferragni Brand

“In a few years, we might not still be into Instagram, but hopefully  
I’ll be into the next thing and have fun do it.”  
- Chiara Ferragni<sup>1206</sup>

Furthermore, Ferragni, and the human brand she embodies, are evidence of the intensity of interest which her private and public life engenders in her followers. The phenomenon of *seriality*, an essential mode of cultural production in contemporary society, in which a narrative is divided into segments that are released to audiences in a serial can be seen as a foundational mechanism behind Ferragni’s storytelling practices on Instagram.<sup>1207</sup> Indeed, the scopophilic spectacle of Ferragni's everyday life which forms the basis of the content on her profile, combined with the ostentation of her relationship with fellow celebrity Fedez, has triggered many of the same narrative mechanisms - of seriality, plot and pacing, character development, and intrigue - which are more commonly associated with television programmes, radio plays, and nineteenth-century novels, than with an Instagram post.<sup>1208</sup> It may even be argued that Ferragni, consciously or not, as she famously claims to post wholly intuitively without a set communication strategy,<sup>1209</sup> draws on many of the same techniques of serialisation seen in the distribution of novels in chapters in newspaper or magazines of the last century; and serial format of radio plays and television in the twentieth century in the form of soap operas.<sup>1210</sup>

By drawing on these techniques, Ferragni leaves her legions of followers waiting in anticipation with bated breath: every half-told narrative, every time a story is broken into segments on Instagram stories, every mile stone and much-anticipated event keeps her audience riveted to her own personal story.<sup>1211</sup> From adverts for designers brands to moments of family life shared with the world,<sup>1212</sup> the content posted on her profile tells a story which, in another context, would be understood to form the basis of a novel; from its publication on a mass communication medium; to the fragmentation of her story into posts; to the repetitiveness of the narrative schemes she employs; to the loyalty of her enraptured audience; and, finally, to the breadth of her scope of influence owing to her power to tell authentic, compelling stories.<sup>1213</sup>

In addition, as her story is not told through analogue photography and film, her narrative may evolve and take on new permutation by the minute, rendering it something which is no longer constructed by an audience *a*

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<sup>1206</sup> Chiara Ferragni Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 30, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/chiara\\_ferragni\\_779492](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/chiara_ferragni_779492)

<sup>1207</sup> Polesana M.A. (2017), Chiara Ferragni: il corpo simulacro, IULM Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione di Milano.

<sup>1208</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1209</sup> Keinan A., Maslauskaitė K., Crener S., Dessain Vincent (2015), The Blonde Salad, Harvard Business School.

<sup>1210</sup> Polesana M.A. (2017), Chiara Ferragni: il corpo simulacro, IULM Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione di Milano.

<sup>1211</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1212</sup> Chiara Ferragni Instagram Account: <https://www.instagram.com/chiaraFerragni/?hl=en>

<sup>1213</sup> Polesana M.A. (2017), Chiara Ferragni: il corpo simulacro, IULM Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione di Milano.

*posteriori*, but as it happens, lending a *diachronic* and *synchronic* dimension to her story.<sup>1214</sup> Ferragni who is a master of integrating diachronic and synchronic timelines in her storytelling, is often seen to pause her current narrative by inserting photos of past events, both recent, such as her multiple repostings of her engagement to her now husband at a concert in Verona, and distant, such as in family snaps from her childhood.<sup>1215</sup> This interweaving of past and present strands of a single overarching life narrative adds layers of authenticity to her storytelling by presenting content as both a form of documentary and celebration.<sup>1216</sup> Inasmuch, besides the mechanisms of seriality, Ferragni can be said to make use of the techniques of *Baasan brand narration*, in which a brand draws on its history to both attest to its solidity and credibility while also establishing its strength and effectiveness through the value entailed by its past history.<sup>1217</sup> As is such, Ferragni's presence on Instagram must be interpreted not just as another influencer posting cute outfit photos, but as the work of a skillful narrator and businesswoman fully engaged with her audience and responsive to their need for storytelling.

### 4.3 Case Study Two: A Narrative of Redemption, Cristiano Ronaldo and the CR7 Experience

“Winning - that's the most important to me. It's as simple as that.”

- Cristiano Ronaldo<sup>1218</sup>

Cristiano Ronaldo, the world's highest paid football player at present and a global celebrity with a sphere of influence that reaches far beyond the football pitch, serves as the third case study examined in this thesis. Like Chiara Ferragni, Ronaldo has distinguished himself within his chosen field and has, as a consequence, found himself in a position of great influence over the followers he has accrued, both professionally as an athlete and as a businessman and face of his brand, CR7. However, Ronaldo's journey to become one of the most recognisable and widely-known footballers today has been fraught with countless struggles, from a difficult childhood to struggles both off and on the pitch. As is such, his story is one of redemption and of rebirth, in which the Portuguese footballer has shifted the dialogue on his career and celebrity, leveraging his fame to better tell his own story while developing a distinctive brand in the meanwhile.<sup>1219</sup> Not content to simply be, arguably, the greatest living footballer, Ronaldo has reinvented himself in recent years in service of the creation of his own human brand, marking his entry into the world of digital marketing with the launch of his digital brand, 7egend in addition to his fashion and fragrance lines under the CR7 brand umbrella.<sup>1220</sup> As the most

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<sup>1214</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1215</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1216</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1217</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1218</sup> Cristiano Ronaldo Quotes: Winning - that's the most important to me. It's as simple as that. Cristiano Ronaldo

Last seen 29 May 2019, [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/cristiano\\_ronaldo\\_745006](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/cristiano_ronaldo_745006)

<sup>1219</sup> Rocknread (2019), *Storie Che Incantano – Intervista Andrea Fontana*

<https://www.rocknread.it/storie-che-incantano-intervista-andrea-fontana/>

<sup>1220</sup> La Repubblica (2015) <https://www.repubblica.it/rubriche/la-storia/2015/12/news/129987558/#slider129993132>

followed athlete in the world, with 120 million followers on Facebook,<sup>1221</sup> 78 million on Twitter, and an additional 168 million on Instagram,<sup>1222</sup> Ronaldo's audience is roughly the half of Europe,<sup>1223</sup> lending the footballer the ears a significant portion of the world's consumers through his activities on social media. In addition to his digital brand and social media presence, he has also sought to bring his message to television, truly completing the transmedia trifecta and expanding his audience even further. To better understand how the Juventus forward and five time champion of the FIFA Ballon d'Or<sup>1224</sup> has become such a global powerhouse, we turn to his history as both an athlete and a celebrity.

### 4.3.1 Cristiano Ronaldo dos Santos Aveiro: Celebrity, Athlete, and Entrepreneur

**“There are people out there who hate me and who say I'm arrogant, vain, and whatever. That's all part of my success. I am made to be the best.”**  
- Cristiano Ronaldo<sup>1225</sup>

Cristiano Ronaldo dos Santos Aveiro, better known as Cristiano Ronaldo, has gained international renown as a professional footballer and is, undoubtedly, one of the greatest players of all time,<sup>1226</sup> with a record five Ballon d'Or awards,<sup>1227</sup> four European Golden Shoes award,<sup>1228</sup> six league titles,<sup>1229</sup> five UEFA Champions League titles,<sup>1230</sup> and one World Cup win,<sup>1231</sup> the prolific goalscorer, holds countless records and has received innumerable awards for his feats on the pitch. The now 34 year old, who first signed with Manchester United at age 18 some fifteen years ago,<sup>1232</sup> ascent in the field has been meteoric, making him one of the most valuable and sought after players in the world, as is evidenced by the historic transfer fees and remuneration he has received throughout his career.<sup>1233</sup> Indeed, Ronaldo has consistently ranked amongst the world's highest-paid

<sup>1221</sup>Cristiano Ronaldo Facebook Account: <https://www.facebook.com/Cristiano/>

<sup>1222</sup> Cristiano Ronaldo Instagram Account: <https://www.instagram.com/cristiano/?hl=en>

<sup>1223</sup> World Population, last seen 30 May 2019, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_population](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_population)

<sup>1224</sup> Trans Market, Cristiano Ronaldo, Last Seen 30 May 2019, <https://www.transfermarkt.co.uk/cristiano-ronaldo/erfolge/spieler/8198>

<sup>1225</sup> Cristiano Ronaldo Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 27, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/cristiano\\_ronaldo\\_745016](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/cristiano_ronaldo_745016)

<sup>1226</sup> Knight R. (2018), Pelé has been voted the greatest footballer of all time Brazilian star beats out Diego Maradona, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo to top spot, Last seen 28 May 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/pele-greatest-footballer-brazil-messi-ronaldo-maradona-voted-a8371576.html>

<sup>1227</sup> Top end Sports, Ballon d'Or award, last seen 20 May 2019, <https://www.topendsports.com/sport/soccer/list-player-of-the-year-ballondor.htm>

<sup>1228</sup> Goal.com, Golden Shoe 2018-19: Messi, Mbappe, Ronaldo & Europe's top scorers <https://www.goal.com/en/lists/golden-shoe-2018-19-messi-mbappe-ronaldo-europes-top-scorers/qlukekp7wi9s1cg19fc4y2zo4>

<sup>1229</sup> List of career achievements by Cristiano Ronaldo [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_career\\_achievements\\_by\\_Cristiano\\_Ronaldo#Club](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_career_achievements_by_Cristiano_Ronaldo#Club)

<sup>1230</sup> Samedi (2018) Ronaldo first to win five Champions League titles, Cristiano Ronaldo has become the first player to win five UEFA Champions League finals, Last seen 16 May 2019, <https://fr.uefa.com/uefachampionsleague/news/newsid=2475340.html>

<sup>1231</sup> Kelly R. (2018), Cristiano Ronaldo's history at the World Cup: 2006 debut, 2014 heartache & record-breaking 2018

<https://www.goal.com/en/news/cristiano-ronaldos-history-at-the-world-cup-2006-debut-2014-3gago097ess01szjb0ve7nhu9>

<sup>1232</sup> Manchester United F.C.: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manchester\\_United\\_F.C.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manchester_United_F.C.)

<sup>1233</sup> Reed A. (2018), How Cristiano Ronaldo's Juventus move could start the summer transfer domino effect, last seen 12 May 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/07/11/cristiano-ronaldo-juventus-move-start-of-summer-transfer-season.html>

athlete by *Forbes*,<sup>1234</sup> in addition to being named the world's most famous athlete by ESPN in 2016, 2017, and 2018.<sup>1235</sup>

Cristiano Ronaldo's humble beginnings as a child from a middle class family on the Portuguese island of Madeira belie the success he has achieved both on and off the football pitch.<sup>1236</sup> As addressed above, the football champion has gained international acclaim through his athletic feats over the last fifteen years, beginning with his sensation first professional season playing for Manchester United at the age of sixteen.<sup>1237</sup> The now 34-year-old celebrity footballer in recent years, however, has caught the attention of consumers for his personal branding efforts, drawing upon his vast fan base to serve as the foundation for the creation of his CR7 brand. By all accounts, his efforts have been largely successful, with CR7's assets estimated to amount to 280 million USD<sup>1238</sup> and a growing empire of hotels, museums, and restaurants under his belt.

Between record-breaking performances on the pitch and his victories in football's most important championships, Ronaldo has become a living legend - an image encouraged by Ronaldo himself whose social media communications refer to him simply as "The Legend."<sup>1239</sup> The "monster who came to earth from another planet,"<sup>1240</sup> as Ronaldo refers to himself, has built his CR7 brand with the same talent, discipline, dedication, and strategic insights which have advanced his sporting career, and, just as his career as an athlete has sparked criticism and idolisation alike,<sup>1241</sup> so too has his personal brand attracted both supporters and detractors. However, despite his remarkable success on the pitch, to consider Ronaldo to be simply a football player occludes the way in which the Portuguese footballer has capitalised on his celebrity as one of the most well-known athletes in the world to become a human brand. As both an endorser and a promoter of his own personal brand, he has earned millions, making him one of the most highly paid and influential star athletes alive today, taking home a salary of €61 million annually, with a further €47 million coming from endorsements alone.<sup>1242</sup>

Moreover, the mere association with his name, for instance, to FC Juventus has led to an increase of the club's value, making him truly one of the most valuable players today. This effect has also been witnessed in Ronaldo's many endorsement deals from which 47% of his revenue stems.<sup>1243</sup> Ranging from Nike, for which he serves as a brand ambassador, to other top brands such as Armani, Samsung, EA Sports, Herbalife, American

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<sup>1234</sup> Forbes, The World's Highest-Paid Athletes <https://www.forbes.com/athletes/#1b21f66855ae>

<sup>1235</sup> World Fame 100, last seen 15 May 2019 [http://www.espn.com/espn/feature/story/\\_/page/WorldFame/espn-world-fame-100-2018](http://www.espn.com/espn/feature/story/_/page/WorldFame/espn-world-fame-100-2018)

<sup>1236</sup> Rollin J. (2019), Cristiano Ronaldo Portuguese Football Player, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Cristiano-Ronaldo>

<sup>1237</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1238</sup> Milano F. (2018), Ronaldo da sogno estivo a realtà della Juve: quanto vale il marchio CR7, Last seen 15 May 2019, <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2018-07-03/ronaldo-sogno-estivo-juve-quanto-vale-marchio-cr7-165553.shtml?uuiid=AEufqNGF>

<sup>1239</sup> Ronaldo Update Facebook Account: <https://www.facebook.com/RonaldoUpdate/>

<sup>1240</sup> Della Palma A. (2018), Siamo sicuri che Cristiano Ronaldo non sia il più grande di sempre?, Last seen 25 May 2019, [https://www.corrieredellosport.it/news/calcio/champions-league/2018/04/04-40915041/siamo\\_sicuri\\_che\\_cristiano\\_ronaldo\\_non\\_sia\\_il\\_pi\\_grande\\_di\\_sempre/](https://www.corrieredellosport.it/news/calcio/champions-league/2018/04/04-40915041/siamo_sicuri_che_cristiano_ronaldo_non_sia_il_pi_grande_di_sempre/)

<sup>1241</sup> Sportsnet, Cristiano Ronaldo surprised by increasing criticism, Last seen 18 May 2019,

<https://www.sportsnet.ca/soccer/cristiano-ronaldo-surprised-increasing-criticism/>

<sup>1242</sup> Forbes, The World's Highest-Paid Athletes <https://www.forbes.com/athletes/#1b21f66855ae>

<sup>1243</sup> Ibidem.

Tourister, Castrol, KFC, Emirates, and Toyota amongst others, the footballer has proven his business acumen by securing numerous lucrative endorsement deals in recent years. However, it is Ronaldo's lifetime Nike contract, which is worth \$1 billion USD which has had the greatest impact on his global celebrity.<sup>1244</sup> It should come as little surprise that myriad firms, across a variety of sectors, have sought out Ronaldo to become the face of their brands as he is most popular athlete in the world with a total 340 million social media followers.<sup>1245</sup> In addition to Ronaldo's role as an endorser, his own brand of CR7 branded products, a chain of hotels located in Europe and North America, and a string of restaurants in Brazil, has further increased the scope of his influence as a globally recognisable celebrity.

Turning to a close examination of his eponymous brand, CR7, which gained its name from Ronaldo's initials plus the number on his first jersey,<sup>1246</sup> has comprised the bulk of Ronaldo's revenue in recent years. Indeed, the brand is arguably the main source of his financial success and, moreover, serves to differentiate the footballer from other greats in his field who have foregone the opportunity to fashion personal brands for themselves. CR7, which is composed of six different commercial lines - Footwear, Underwear, Junior, Fragrances, Limitless, and Digital-Transformers - has proven itself to be exceptionally successful due in large part to the distinct marketing strategy present in each, focussing on the creation of social profiles designed to intercept specific targets and broaden Ronaldo's already substantial audience.<sup>1247</sup>

To this effect, the various CR7 brands have largely focussed their communications and marketing strategy on accruing as many followers as possible on social media. CR7 Footwear, the most successful of Ronaldo's self-styled brands, has amassed roughly 250 thousand fans on Facebook<sup>1248</sup> and over 1.1 million followers on Instagram,<sup>1249</sup> for instance. These figures have been bolstered by the fact that Ronaldo has appeared as both a promoter and a model for the brand, in an effort to target consumers who view the player as being representative of an aspirational lifestyle brand.<sup>1250</sup> Ronaldo's CR7 Underwear line, which is distributed in Spain, Portugal and, recently, in Italy, has further increased his credibility, not just as an athlete, but as a brand in his own right.<sup>1251</sup> These lines, in combination with CR7 Junior, his children's clothing line, CR7 Fragrances, which produces perfumes, shower gels, aftershaves, deodorants and gift products, and CR7

<sup>1244</sup>Cristiano Ronaldo, 2018 CELEBRITY 100 EARNINGS, last seen 18 May 2019 <https://www.forbes.com/profile/cristiano-ronaldo/#2b751b64565d>

<sup>1245</sup>Roca A. (2018), Cristiano Ronaldo: The social media king, last seen 18 May 2019

<https://www.marca.com/en/football/international-football/2018/10/20/5bca53b7e2704e11378b463d.html>

<sup>1246</sup>Baptista R. (2018), Brand CR7: Cristiano Ronaldo tra marketing, social e storytelling, Cristiano Ronaldo non è solo un fenomeno calcistico ma anche social e pubblicitario: un'analisi del brand CR7 tra storytelling e marketing, Last seen 14 May 2019

<https://www.insidemarketing.it/brand-cr7-tra-marketing-e-storytelling/> <https://www.insidemarketing.it/brand-cr7-tra-marketing-e-storytelling/>

<sup>1247</sup>La Repubblica (2015) [https://www.repubblica.it/rubriche/la-storia/2015/12/news/129987558/#slider12999313222/dal\\_volo\\_di\\_jordan\\_a\\_cristiano\\_ronaldo\\_quando\\_il\\_campione\\_diventa\\_logo-gallery-](https://www.repubblica.it/rubriche/la-storia/2015/12/news/129987558/#slider12999313222/dal_volo_di_jordan_a_cristiano_ronaldo_quando_il_campione_diventa_logo-gallery-)

<https://www.sporteconomy.it/cr7-si-trasforma-in-industry-of-wide-consumption/>

<sup>1248</sup>CR7 Footwear Facebook Account: <https://www.facebook.com/cr7footwear/>

<sup>1249</sup>CR7 Footwear Instagram Account: [https://www.instagram.com/cr7\\_footwear/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/cr7_footwear/?hl=en)

<sup>1250</sup>Sports Economy (2017) [22/dal\\_volo\\_di\\_jordan\\_a\\_cristiano\\_ronaldo\\_quando\\_il\\_campione\\_diventa\\_logo-gallery-https://www.sporteconomy.it/cr7-si-trasforma-in-industry-of-wide-consumption/](https://www.sporteconomy.it/cr7-si-trasforma-in-industry-of-wide-consumption/)

<sup>1251</sup>Ibidem.

Limitless, a denim line, each with their own legions of followers, serve as tangible proof of all the Juventus champion's initiatives on social media.<sup>1252</sup>

**Figure 39. SWOT Analysis of Cristiano Ronaldo and CR7 - Personal Elaboration of the Author (2019)**



### 4.3.2 The Influence of Cristiano Ronaldo on Social Media

**“We cannot live being obsessed with what other people think about us.”**

- **Cristiano Ronaldo**<sup>1253</sup>

The influence of Cristiano Ronaldo on social media is undeniable - with over 350 million followers on the three major social media platforms and brands clamoring to engage his services as an endorser at a reported 750

<sup>1252</sup>Ibidem..

<sup>1253</sup> Cristiano Ronaldo Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 27, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/cristiano\\_ronaldo\\_745015](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/cristiano_ronaldo_745015)

thousand USD per post,<sup>1254</sup> he has been the most popular person on Instagram since January 2019<sup>1255</sup> and the most popular footballer on Facebook,<sup>1256</sup> rendering his reach and influence unparalleled in the field of celebrity athletes. These statistics are confirmed by his ranking of the Davie-Brown Index (DBI), a metric designed to quantify consumers' perceptions of celebrities, whether they be athletes, politicians, musicians, film stars, for brand agencies and marketers.<sup>1257</sup> Moreover, the DBI is not simply a tool to measure celebrity popularity, but an essential data top that may be exploited to assess a celebrity's ability to influence consumers' purchase intent and brand affinity.<sup>1258</sup> Ronaldo's DBI score, for instance, reveals that more than 90% of consumers are aware of Ronaldo as an athlete and celebrity; whereas, when compared to Messi, a footballer of commensurate professional ability, only 87% of those polled were able to identify him.<sup>1259</sup> Ronaldo's widespread recognition is due, in large part, to his success on the football pitch, as being, arguably, the world's greatest living footballer naturally would; however, his consistent activity on social media platform should also be considered to be a vital element of his global notoriety. It is this international visibility, as expressed in his high DBI score, which makes Ronaldo the most marketable football player in the world.<sup>1260</sup>

Ronaldo himself would argue that it is his clarity of vision and dedication to winning which has lead to his position of prominence in the field. The footballer, who once remarked when asked what motivated him, "Winning - that's the most important to me. It's as simple as that,"<sup>1261</sup> is a standard bearer in the field of celebrity athletes on social media, and, indeed he could rightly be said to be winning the competition to become the best known footballer in the world.<sup>1262</sup> How then has he achieved such great strides on social media? As will be further elaborated below, Ronaldo can be seen to exemplify four metrics of influence in his social media communications on platforms such as Instagram.

*The development of a personal brand:* through social media, Ronaldo has crafted a personal brand based largely on his own perceived traits of strength, affability, and competence, in his CR7 product line. Following in wake of the Vero Athlete, Brava Persona, and Life Coach prototypes, which failed to positively influence a target audience due to their lack of breadth, CR7 has found enormous success in Europe by expanding its offerings to

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<sup>1254</sup>Roca A. (2018), Cristiano Ronaldo: The social media king, Last seen 18 May 2018, <https://www.marca.com/en/football/international-football/2018/10/20/5bca53b7e2704e11378b463d.html>

<sup>1255</sup>Statista Portal, Instagram accounts with the most followers worldwide as of May 2019 (in millions), last seen 18 may 2019 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/421169/most-followers-instagram/>

<sup>1256</sup>Soccer players with the most Facebook fans as of April 2019 (in millions), last seen 18 May 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/275885/soccer-players-facebook-fans/>

<sup>1257</sup>Nielsen Sports, Sochi Insights, <https://niensports.com/sochi-celebrity-dbi-2/>

<sup>1258</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1259</sup>Mandal R. (2018), The Digital Marketing Case Study of Cristiano Ronaldo, last seen 30 May 2019, <https://digitalready.co/blog/the-digital-marketing-case-study-of-cristiano-ronaldo>

<sup>1260</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1261</sup> Cristiano Ronaldo Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 27, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/cristiano\\_ronaldo\\_745006](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/cristiano_ronaldo_745006)

<sup>1262</sup>Statista Portal, Instagram accounts with the most followers worldwide as of May 2019 (in millions), last seen 30 amy 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/421169/most-followers-instagram/>

include a wide variety of products and ranges.<sup>1263</sup> In addition, CR7 is easily associated with Ronaldo himself, sharing many of the same points of reference in terms of brand identity, image, and values.

*Authentic communication:* above all, communication on social media must be authentic in the eyes of consumers to be compelling and Ronaldo's posts do just that. He is perceived to be open and honest about who he is and what he stands for, even when what he reveals is less than desirable, such as when he dismissed allegations of rape against himself as "fake news" on Instagram.<sup>1264</sup> Regardless of social media missteps such as these, he is consistent both in the content of the posts he publishes and in the format they take on, which is mostly visual with limited text.<sup>1265</sup> This strategy serves to increase his fan base, without alienating speakers of other languages as Ronaldo almost exclusively captions his images in either his native Portuguese or English.<sup>1266</sup>

*Relevant sponsorship and endorsement deals:* unlike other athletes, or celebrities for that matter, Ronaldo has confined himself to endorsing brands which ultimately serve to bolster his popularity while reinforcing the image and values of his own personal brand.<sup>1267</sup> Beyond the creation of CR7, which embodies Ronaldo's public identity as a personal brand, the footballer has focussed on amplifying his image of the unbeatable sportsman by partnering with fitness and lifestyle brands, such as Herbalife, EA SPORT, and Nike, with which he has secured a one billion USD lifetime contract, an honour shared with Michael Jordan and LeBron James alone.<sup>1268</sup>

*The creation and nurturing of relationships that add value to a personal brand:* Ronaldo can be said to be a master of relationship building in service of his personal brand without ever giving the impression that somehow his actions are motivated by secondary motives, such as financial gain or fame.<sup>1269</sup> Instead, his interactions with fellow players and fans alike are perceived to be genuine and stemming from an authentic interest in the community which has been built up around his global celebrity.<sup>1270</sup> Indeed, he is well-known in

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<sup>1263</sup> Propato G.L.(2018), Il brand Cristiano Ronaldo: il suo modello di marketing, comunicazione e personal branding, Human Marketing, last seen 20 May 2019, <https://www.lucapropato.com/blog/cristiano-ronaldo-marketing-personal-branding.html>

<sup>1264</sup> Graham C. (2018), They want to promote themselves by using my name': Cristiano Ronaldo calls rape accusations 'fake news' in grinning video on Instagram to his 142 million followers just hours after US model said he violently assaulted her, last seen 28 May 2019, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6223165/Ronaldo-posts-video-calling-rape-allegations-fake-news-Instagram.html>

<sup>1265</sup> Propato G.L.(2018), Il brand Cristiano Ronaldo: il suo modello di marketing, comunicazione e personal branding, Human Marketing, last seen 20 May 2019, <https://www.lucapropato.com/blog/cristiano-ronaldo-marketing-personal-branding.html>

<sup>1266</sup> Cristiano Ronaldo Instagram Account: <https://www.instagram.com/cristiano/?hl=en>

<sup>1267</sup> Propato G.L.(2018), Il brand Cristiano Ronaldo: il suo modello di marketing, comunicazione e personal branding, Human Marketing, last seen 20 May 2019, <https://www.lucapropato.com/blog/cristiano-ronaldo-marketing-personal-branding.html>

<sup>1268</sup> Badenhausen K.(2016), Why Cristiano Ronaldo's \$1 Billion Nike Deal May Be A Bargain For Sportswear Giant, last seen 28 May 2019 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kurtbadenhausen/2016/12/02/cristiano-ronaldos-1-billion-nike-deal-is-a-bargain-for-sportswear-giant/>

<sup>1269</sup> Propato G.L.(2018), Il brand Cristiano Ronaldo: il suo modello di marketing, comunicazione e personal branding, Human Marketing, last seen 20 May 2019, <https://www.lucapropato.com/blog/cristiano-ronaldo-marketing-personal-branding.html>

<sup>1270</sup> Ibidem.

large part for his generosity and compassion, especially towards children’s causes to which he has donated millions over the course of his career.<sup>1271</sup> One such example of his involvement in charitable causes is the selfie application launched by CR7, in which all proceeds are donated to Save The Children.<sup>1272</sup> From children’s charities to giving a fan with a broken nose the jersey off of his back,<sup>1273</sup> Ronaldo is seen to be a figure for good in his field, further bolstering positive associations in consumers between Cristiano Ronaldo the individual and Cristiano Ronaldo the brand. This is reflected in the enormous growth of his popularity on social media as reflected in the figure below:

**Figure 40. Growth in Cristiano Ronaldo’s Social Media Profile - Ninjaletics (2018)**



Fonte: [www.ninjalitics.com/juventus.html](http://www.ninjalitics.com/juventus.html) 1274

<sup>1271</sup> Serudsindia, CHARITY WORK BY CRISTIANO RONALDO WILL MAKE YOU HIS FAN (FOR SURE), LAST SEEN 28 MAY 2019, <https://www.serudsindia.org/charity-work-by-cristiano-ronaldo/>

<sup>1272</sup> Save the Children, Soccer Superstar Cristiano Ronaldo Launches New Selfie App, Donation for Every Download Helps Kids in Need <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/about-us/media-and-news/2016-press-releases/soccer-superstar-cristiano-ronaldo-launches-new-selfie-app--dona>

<sup>1273</sup> Cristiano Ronaldo gave a t-shirt fans for broken nose (2011), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dM2uLCJNF50&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>1274</sup> Propato G.L. (2018), Il brand Cristiano Ronaldo: il suo modello di marketing, comunicazione e personal branding, Human Marketing, last seen 20 May 2019, <https://www.lucapropato.com/blog/cristiano-ronaldo-marketing-personal-branding.html>

### 4.3.3 Personal Branding, Storytelling, and the Creation of a Narrative of Greatness

“I’m aware that, whatever the circumstances, there will always be speculation about me.”

- Cristiano Ronaldo<sup>1275</sup>

Few, if any, have been to monetise their reputation as well as Cristiano Ronaldo who, through a strategy combining international renown as a champion athlete, multiple advertising and endorsement contract with major brands, and well-defined personal branding based on storytelling on social media, has become not just the most followed person on Instagram,<sup>1276</sup> but also one of the most well-paid athletes of all time.<sup>1277</sup> As the foundation of Ronaldo’s success as a public figure is the narrative around his legend of football glory and mystical beginnings,<sup>1278</sup> which is reinforced by the strategic use of storytelling in CR7’s brand communication on social media channels.<sup>1279</sup>

Instances of storytelling as applied to brand communication are rife in Ronaldo’s social media pages, such as his participation in the "Striker Force 7," cartoon series on Facebook in which the player is both the protagonist and superhero of a ragtag team of human and alien footballers.<sup>1280</sup> Indeed, Ronaldo’s foray into the world of children’s entertainment can be seen as part of a larger strategy in service of the myth-building around which his public image has been constructed.<sup>1281</sup> Ronaldo himself has been shown to be keen to build the myth on his own exceptionalism, or “superpower” as it were,<sup>1282</sup> stating “I am a monster who came to earth from another planet,”<sup>1283</sup> conceivably to become the best football player in the world.

The myth-building enterprise at the heart of the CR7 brand was further bolstered by his transfer to Turin’s Juventus team, which was described by those in the industry as "the coup of the century."<sup>1284</sup> However,

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<sup>1275</sup> Cristiano Ronaldo Quotes. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 27, 2019, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/cristiano\\_ronaldo\\_745016](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/cristiano_ronaldo_745016)

<sup>1276</sup> Statista Portal (2019), Instagram accounts with the most followers worldwide as of May 2019 (in millions), <https://www.statista.com/statistics/421169/most-followers-instagram/>

<sup>1277</sup> Forbes, The World’s Highest-Paid Athlete, <https://www.forbes.com/athletes/#82c8d3f55ae5>

<sup>1278</sup> Della Palma A. (2018), Siamo sicuri che Cristiano Ronaldo non sia il più grande di sempre?, last seen 30 May 2019 [https://www.corrieredellosport.it/news/calcio/champions-league/2018/04/04-40915041/siamo\\_sicuri\\_che\\_cristiano\\_ronaldo\\_non\\_sia\\_il\\_pi\\_grande\\_di\\_sempre/](https://www.corrieredellosport.it/news/calcio/champions-league/2018/04/04-40915041/siamo_sicuri_che_cristiano_ronaldo_non_sia_il_pi_grande_di_sempre/)

<sup>1279</sup> Baptista R. (2018), Brand CR7: Cristiano Ronaldo tra marketing, social e storytelling, Cristiano Ronaldo non è solo un fenomeno calcistico ma anche social e pubblicitario: un’analisi del brand CR7 tra storytelling e marketing <https://www.insidemarketing.it/brand-cr7-tra-marketing-e-storytelling/>

<sup>1280</sup> Cision, Cristiano Ronaldo Launches "Striker Force 7" Comic Book As Part Of "Free Comic Book Day" On May 4th, 30 May 2019, <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/cristiano-ronaldo-launches-striker-force-7-comic-book-as-part-of-free-comic-book-day-on-may-4th-300843571.html>

<sup>1281</sup> Baptista R. (2018), Brand CR7: Cristiano Ronaldo tra marketing, social e storytelling, Cristiano Ronaldo non è solo un fenomeno calcistico ma anche social e pubblicitario: un’analisi del brand CR7 tra storytelling e marketing <https://www.insidemarketing.it/brand-cr7-tra-marketing-e-storytelling/>

<sup>1282</sup> Marca, Cristiano Ronaldo: People think I'm not human but I am, last seen 28 May 2019, <https://www.marca.com/en/football/real-madrid/2016/11/08/5822397946163f85458b4695.html>

<sup>1283</sup> Della Palma A. (2018), Siamo sicuri che Cristiano Ronaldo non sia il più grande di sempre? Last seen 18 May 2019, [https://www.corrieredellosport.it/news/calcio/champions-league/2018/04/04-40915041/siamo\\_sicuri\\_che\\_cristiano\\_ronaldo\\_non\\_sia\\_il\\_pi\\_grande\\_di\\_sempre/](https://www.corrieredellosport.it/news/calcio/champions-league/2018/04/04-40915041/siamo_sicuri_che_cristiano_ronaldo_non_sia_il_pi_grande_di_sempre/)

<sup>1284</sup> Sky Sport, Ronaldo alla Juve, il colpo del secolo, Last seen 22 May 2019, <https://sport.sky.it/speciale/calciomercato/cristiano-ronaldo-alla-juventus.html>

this move was not mere jockeying for power on the pitch, but the result of well-developed marketing strategy on the part of Juventus and Ronaldo alike, rendering the historical transfer remarkable not just for the size of the investment in a single player, but that fact that 340 million euros transfer fee is estimated to be repaid to the club by virtue of the sale of merchandise featuring Ronaldo alone.<sup>1285</sup> As has been noted by Sardella, "In terms of marketing, the Ronaldo-Juventus operation appears as a giant coup co-branding: two companies get together to achieve common business goals. Beyond the field, Juventus and Ronaldo can conquer the most important market, answering a simple question: what do CR7-JUVE fans want to buy? The crisis becomes the code name of a money machine ready to win all the marketing wars."<sup>1286</sup> From this transfer, Ronaldo stands to increase his revenue through merchandising, advertising, and promotions, while increasing his credibility and visibility in the field.<sup>1287</sup>

In addition, Ronaldo, who has an enormous following on social media, has only increased his public visibility by signing with the team, as is seen in the jump in follows, likes, and other metrics of user engagement following his transfer.<sup>1288</sup> Like Chiara Ferragni, the first case study addressed in this chapter, he has been seen to capitalise on major announcements such as his transfer to Juventus, the birth of his twins, and holidays<sup>1289</sup> - his top three most liked photos respectively on Instagram - to craft a public narrative about his life, as both a public and private figure. In addition, Ronaldo's posting schedule, in which fragments of a single unifying narrative are told in serial installments, can be seen as evidence of his use of seriality as a narrative tool. These mechanisms of narrative, which serve to engage, compel, and convince his audience as evidence of his strength as a storyteller and narrator of his exceptional experience.

## Conclusion

Through the case studies examined in Chapter Four emerges a template for effective human brand building through storytelling on social media platforms, specifically Instagram. As has been addressed in Case Study One, focussing on Chiara Ferragni, and Case Study Two, centred round Cristiano Ronaldo, these two figures have built up sizable social media followings based largely on their abilities as storytellers *par excellence* which have been used to both increase their fame and develop a narrative focalised on their own distinctive brand identities. Through a process of strategic communication, using narrative tools such as seriality and mixed temporality, Ronaldo and Ferragni, as the living embodiment of a brand, have managed to effectively convey a number of elements associated with persuasive storytelling on social media, including: credibility and

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<sup>1285</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1286</sup> Falcini D. (2018), CR7+Juventus, insieme per fare tantissimi soldi A poche ore dall'annuncio del portoghese la società bianconera ha ottenuto più di un milione di follower in più, che ora deve monetizzare. Perché l'affare del secolo è il primo caso di co-branding tra due grandi multinazionali del pallone, Last seen 14 May 2019 <https://www.rollingstone.it/sport/cr7juventus-insieme-per-fare-tantissimi-soldi/420044/#Part6>

<sup>1287</sup> Baptista R. (2018), Brand CR7: Cristiano Ronaldo tra marketing, social e storytelling, Cristiano Ronaldo non è solo un fenomeno calcistico ma anche social e pubblicitario: un'analisi del brand CR7 tra storytelling e marketing, Last seen 14 May 2019 <https://www.insidemarketing.it/brand-cr7-tra-marketing-e-storytelling/>

<sup>1288</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>1289</sup> Agbo N. (2018), Cristiano Ronaldo Tops "Most Liked Instagram Posts Of All Time", last seen 15 May 2019, <https://guardian.ng/life/cristiano-ronaldo-tops-most-liked-instagram-posts-of-all-time/>

authenticity; attractiveness; and, perhaps most importantly, relatability. These aspects of their respective communication strategies can be seen to be an essential elements in the creation of a human brand, as the mechanisms behind anthropomorphisation require the supplementation of human-like traits to the brands, typically set in motion by the perception of distinctive features of personality such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, and competence, in an non-human actor. Therefore, Ronaldo and Ferragni, rather than just being an attractive face behind a brand's image, have developed a distinctive brand personality which is easily recognisable and differs from her competitors in the field. In addition, by pivoting between platforms when required, in order to attract continuously larger audiences, Ferragni and Ronaldo demonstrate the need for a responsible, flexible, interactive brand strategy that takes into consideration the rapidly changing tastes of consumers in the digital era.

### *Research Framework, Research Methodologies, and a Review of the Findings*

#### 5.1. The Qualitative Research and Methods Employed

My research project consists of, firstly, qualitative research and, secondly, quantitative research undertaken. In respect to the former, I made use of semi-structured interviews dividing the recipients of the interviews on the basis of the categories identified in Chapter Three - namely, *influencers*, *celebrities*, and *experts* in the fashion sector - to understand how contemporary brands can make effective use of the mechanisms of storytelling through Instagram. In addition, I examined the parameters and drivers of purchase intention of consumers on the platform.

Interviewing is the most common information collection tool in the social sciences: according to some estimates, upwards of 90% of social science research uses information gathered through interviews.<sup>1290</sup> Thus, for the aforementioned qualitative research, I have selected semi-structured interviews as my principle means of gathering data. In a semi-structured interview "the interviewer has a list of previously established topics on which he must gather all the information requested with the right to adapt both the questions and the order in which he puts them to the interviewees."<sup>1291</sup> Following this principle, I have undertaken qualitative interviews with individuals who can be considered experts in their given fields.

Experts in the field of influencer marketing, including Giulia Gaudino, Giorgina Clavarino, and Vera Arrivabene serve as interview subjects. The questions addressed to the latter aim to understand the impact of storytelling on Instagram Stories, based on anecdotal experience and the activities of the given individual carried out on the platform. The questions focus on the importance of personal storytelling in the construction of human brands and emphasise the differences between that of the role of celebrities as endorsers for corporate brands, and the kind of narrative self-promotion which occurs on Instagram by influencers in service of self-brand building. For the experts in the sector interviewed, in addition to the topics already mentioned, the questions addressed to them focussed on the launch of new brands on Instagram, and the added value that can be derive from the use of Instagram, in particular of IG stories, on consumer purchase intention. Of the aforementioned experts, the answers provided by McKinsey Partner, Michele Bertoncello, were especially significant, in their relationship to phases of CDJ (Consumer Decision Journey), and to the relationship between CGI (Customer Growth Index) and the use of Instagram.

However, the common thread that unites all the interviews undertaken in service of Chapter Five, is the notion that effective storytelling practices cannot disregard the use of social media as an essential arena in which narrative building takes place today. As is such, it is posited that Instagram, with its multitude of features which

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<sup>1290</sup> Brenner, M.(1980), *Social method and social life*, New York.

<sup>1291</sup> Pitrone, M.C., (1984), *Il sondaggio*, Milano.

facilitate both verbal and visual communication with ever larger audiences, is certainly an important - although not decisive - factor in the purchase intentions of consumers. Rather, CDJ, brand awareness, and brand loyalty are understood to be much more significant aspects of the strategic use of Instagram as a communication tool by marketers.

The interviews were an effective tool to understand the drivers that affect purchase intention, in relation to their impact of social networks, including Instagram. The conversational climate was well-suited to those interviewed who, although recorded, showed interest and willingness to both pose and respond to questions. The answers were spontaneous and direct because they were not prepared in advance. On the day of the interviews, I provided the questions to each interviewee respectively so that he or she could better understand the questions posed to him or her by reading the questions and having time to respond. In essence, a real, organic conversation took place between myself and the interviewees. Below is a summary of my findings and the interviews themselves.

### **5.1.1 The Interviews**

#### **5.1.2 Interview One: Michele Bertoncello, Partner at McKinsey & Company (14 May 2019)**

1. Based on your experience, can you say that the phases of the McKinsey's Consumer Decision Journey can be applied with the same effectiveness to the decision-making processes related to the brands which aim to increase their value on the use of Instagram?

*They certainly apply, but the nuances are different, in particular for the stimulus to purchase and for loyalty. As for the Instagram CDJ, it is much more effective, especially for awareness and consideration, which are the first steps. The more we advance towards the purchase and loyalty phases, the more the sensorial, visual, and immersive elements are important in the customer's experience, so in these phases the social media has less impact, considering also that Instagram has no transaction platform direct, which allows immediate purchase through a click. So its effectiveness in the purchase phase is lower than other digital touchpoints.*

2. Based on your experience, the influence on purchase intention intended to satisfy a personal need of the consumer remains unchanged, even in cases when the lever towards purchase is neither a product nor brand alone, but the person who embodies the brand?

*In general, the use of testimonials and brand ambassadors is more effective in the consideration phase, or in the loyalty phase; therefore, the use or repurchase of a product is due to the desire to associate with a celebrity. Also relevant is the awareness phase if the company opts to position the product in any medium. In the purchase phase the impact of the endorsement or testimonial decreases as having to make an economic outlay, the*

*experience becomes very personal, so surely the incidence of the testimonial is lower compared to the other phases of the CDJ.*

3. The impact generated downstream on the brand is maximised by storytelling if it is built into the message through multiple means, on multiple channels, and strengthened. So, in your opinion, given that through Instagram Stories the consumer has some time to stay with the content - the intended average being 15 seconds - for purchase intention, are Instagram stories an effective form of advertising?

*Instagram, in general as a platform, is much more effective in the phases of awareness, familiarity and consideration, as to further stimulate the purchase it is necessary to minimise the distance of the consumer from the purchase, which means that ideally in the best platforms in the world a single click purchase is possible. This cannot be guaranteed by Instagram; therefore, normally Instagram Stories always refer to a site or a platform where the transaction takes place. The stories are relevant in the last phase of consideration, the one that then leads the consumer to purchase.*

4. Based on your experience, as there is a relationship between initial consideration and growth of the customer base, what influence does Instagram have on the CGI (Customer Growth Index), taking into consideration the effect on the relationship between Initial Consideration Score and the market share obtained by the brand?

*It is very difficult to identify a precise numerical correlation that allows us to calculate with precision what has been indicated. It depends a lot on the effectiveness of the campaign, on the brand, on the product.*

5. In your experience, what impact can the use of Instagram Stories have on future observational analytics, predictive analytics, and prescriptive analytics of brands that identify with a person?

*The impact of IG Stories, as a digital touch point, is certainly important as generating additional content generates an additional value and causes people to be connected longer. Value is generated as data is generated, and this allows an active and precise profiling of the consumer. This has its pros and cons: if the time spent on Instagram is considered totally additional to that on other social media the value is much more important, however, a more correct analysis should consider that time spent on Instagram could be alternative compared to the use of other social media. It is necessary to consider the quality of the profiling that can be extracted from navigation on Instagram compared to that obtainable from other social media. It is not very high more than anything else because it has an interactive content on the part of the consumer in the short term rather low, as it is actually the social media that fills content with the user who has the freedom to watch them or skip them, and in this way expresses interest or not in the content. An evaluation of the value produced by an*

*hour of browsing on Instagram should be compared with the equivalent time spent on other platforms.*

### **5.1.3 Interview Two: Andrea Patumi, Influencer Manager Digital Dust Agency (30 April 2019)**

1. Based on your experience and your role in the industry, has storytelling, in particular narration on IG stories, become a crucial factor for the visibility and reputation of a brand?

*It's absolutely fundamental to give completeness to the communication. To date, 70% of projects are carried out through IG stories.*

2. Based on your experience, is the use of posts on IG more or less effective than IG stories?

*[IG Stories] takes more for positioning than for storytelling. The static post allows the brand to unite, under the same concept, the different personalities involved in a campaign, for example.*

3. As an expert in the field, do you think that Instagram as a media and communications channel is fundamental for the launch of a new brand? Or, is it possible today to do without it, and for what reasons?

*It is critical. Now, the first research a user does when he wants to approach a brand is directly on IG. Even the search engine has faded into the background. [Instagram] can serve us more in the research phase of the POS (point of sales).*

4. According to you, in the current scenario, would you launch a new brand that identifies with your person using only IG (stories, posts, IGTV) as a means of promotion? Alternatively, based on your experience, which tools would you use?

*Certainly, yes. Combined with an important online sales force, and considering that the future will be direct checkout on the platform, I think it is more than enough.*

5. Considering the way in which the influencers and celebrities indicated have exploited self-narration through Instagram to enhance their brand, do you think there are equally effective tools?

*YouTube can be a viable alternative. It all depends on the type of brand and the audience to which you are referring.*

6. If the story of the brand were not also the person's story (testimonial of the brand), would it have the same effect on the purchase intention, in your opinion?

*Surely choosing the testimonial is the most important step. Giving your product to an influencer or endorser*

*who does not share its values could sometimes be counterproductive*

7. In your personal opinion and experience, is the impact that Instagram can have on brand awareness different when the brand is a human or personal brand compared to the case of a brand that uses an equally well-known influencer/ endorser, but that does it not identify with the brand itself?

*Surely when the testimonial becomes part of the family (brand / friends of the house) the brand's goal is more impactful and effective.*

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#### **5.1.4 Interview Three: Agnese Violati, Co-Founder and Digital Manager The Maptique (5 May 2019)**

1. Based on your experience and your role in the industry, has storytelling, in particular narration on IG stories, become a crucial factor for the visibility and reputation of a brand?

*To me, today a good storytelling on Instagram is fundamental, particularly for millennials. There are studies that identify experiential activities as being much more valuable than physical product as they are shareable. Even the luxury [industry] is moving more and more in this direction. As a case study, you could see the latest digital activation of Burberry for the launch of the new T-Bag.*

2. Based on your experience, is the use of posts on IG more or less effective than IG stories?

*It depends on the profile, I think the stories are more effective than the posts for profiles that become "media" in which the influencer puts his face and tells his daily life day by day (eg <https://www.instagram.com/rockandfiocc/> / or <https://www.instagram.com/conoscounposto/> which also reach 15,000 views per story). It's a more immersive storytelling. In my case, IG is more a channel to spread beautiful images, travels, and discoveries. This is why posts on my profile are more effective than stories.*

3. As an expert in the field, do you think that Instagram as a media and communications channel is fundamental for the launch of a new brand? Or, is it possible today to do without it, and for what reasons?

*In my experience, I have a digital boutique agency (The Maptique Studio), IG is just a slice of the communication plan that a brand should activate. In support there should always be Digital PR activities, press office, events, seeding activities if it is a product et cetera.*

4. According to you, in the current scenario, would you launch a new brand that identifies with your person using only IG (stories, posts, IGTV) as a means of promotion? Alternatively, based on your experience, which tools would you use?

*My partner Paola and I decided not to identify our agency and brand with our people as other agencies (eg We Are Lovers) did. We think that not linking one's image to a business makes it more scalable in a long-term vision and makes us more free in decisions. The brand should not necessarily reflect the positioning of our profiles. Eg my IG profile has a 90% Italian audience, The Maptique instead has a foreign audience as its target.*

5. Considering the way in which the influencers and celebrities indicated have exploited self-narration through Instagram to enhance their brand, do you think there are equally effective tools?

*I think that channels like YouTube, if used well, can be much more effective than IG in some cases (eg. <https://www.instagram.com/camihawke/>)*

6. If the story of the brand were not also the person's story (brand endorsement or testimonial), would it have the same effect on the purchase intention, in your opinion?

*It depends on the strength of the brand. Emerging brands usually have greater need to rely on influential profiles in the reference sector than those established and with a very strong brand identity.*

7. In your personal opinion and experience, is the impact that Instagram can have on brand awareness different when the brand is a human or personal brand compared to the case of a brand that uses an equally well-known influencer/ endorser, but that does it not identify with the brand itself?

*In my opinion, identifying the brand with one person can be limiting. I believe that a more tailor-made strategy built on the needs of the brand, using different profiles every time according to the objective, can reach a more targeted and heterogeneous target compared to a brand that identifies itself as a single person.*

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### **5.1.5 Interview Four: Giulia Gaudino, Influencer (29 April 2019)**

1. Based on your experience and your role in the industry, is storytelling - in particular storytelling using IG stories - a crucial factor for visibility and notoriety?

*Storytelling certainly helps to bring the product closer to people because, unlike traditional advertising through the press, television and radio, which are more aseptic and distant and built to make it clear that it is advertising, IG Stories allow you to approach the follower - the user - and insert it more truthfully into a context. This creates more closeness and therefore more effectiveness in the purchase of the product.*

2. Based on your experience, is the use of posts on IG more or less effective than IG stories?

*The introduction of the IG stories has increased the work on our part, but also the effectiveness of communication with followers, since while an Instagram post is more static, generally dealing with photographs, IG stories of influencers that are seen communicating make a lot advertising more effective.*

*Companies are becoming increasingly aware of the higher sales effectiveness of IG stories than posts, and are often led to turn to we influencers to buy packs of stories while leaving out the classic Instagram posts. Moreover, the use of stories allows us to add an explanation to the image and often to show the use of the product.*

3. As an influencer, do you think that the Instagram platform is fundamental for the launch of a new brand? Or, is it possible today to do without it, and for what reasons?

*It certainly depends on the type of product and the public to which it is addressed, as for some types of more "popular" products certainly traditional channels such as TV can have a greater influence on purchases than if it is a clothing line for which it is definitely need to have an Instagram channel. Young brands can use an Instagram figure that has a following, and so depending on the needs of the company, Instagram allows you to select the influencer based on the result the company wants to achieve. This is an important feature for achieving the target requested by the company.*

4. According to you, in the current scenario, would you launch a new brand that identifies with your person using only IG (stories, posts, IGTV) as a means of promotion? Alternatively, based on your experience, which tools would you use?

*Absolutely yes; there are many examples of brands that use only Instagram as a means of promotion. In my case, if I were to launch a new brand, which I am planning to do, I would certainly use Instagram only...with good communication [in] posts and Instagram Stories, alongside a well-structured, very lean online shop. Very fast, very easy to connect very easily to posts and stories, in order to make the purchase very fast.*

5. Considering the way in which the influencers and celebrities indicated have exploited self-narration through Instagram to enhance their brand, do you think there are equally effective tools?

*Today I think not. I do not know what the advertising channels of the future will be, at the moment it is the most effective channel ever, and in which I myself would invest the portion of resources available for product advertising. Given the costs of television commercials or newspaper pages, for the same figures you can implement a truly massive and effective advertising plan on Instagram.*

6. If the story of the brand were not also the person's story (endorsement or testimonial of the brand), would it

have the same effect on the purchase intention, in your opinion?

*Absolutely not. In this way, it would be identical to buying an aseptic television advertisement or newspaper page, far away, clearly advertising. This is precisely the strength of the story, of storytelling, the fact of relying on the story of a person in the flesh for the communication of his product. In this way every type of distance is eliminated and the product inserted in one's daily life is seen, and inserted in its own follow-base. It is on influencers to keep those who follow us entertained, to have a coherent line and not to betray the trust that those who follow us have placed in us.*

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### **5.1.6 Interview Five: Giorgina Clavarino, Influencer (30 April 2019)**

1. Based on your experience and your role in the industry, is storytelling in particular storytelling using IG stories a crucial factor for visibility and notoriety?

*Instagram stories, or social media “stories” in general – have changed the way that we consume social media. The “stories” format that was pioneered by Snapchat is now a staple of the social media world – which means that if Instagram stories are not part of your media mix yet, you should seriously start re-considering them.*

*As much as Instagram stories still do not prove to drive increased visibility, in my experience, they are a different and unfiltered way of sharing what you are passionate and interested about with your Instagram followers. The ephemeral pieces of content we see from our friends, family and influencers on Instagram, Snapchat, and increasingly Facebook, are what consumers want most. The news feed is a relic of the past and while it's not going away anytime soon it will no longer have the same impact it has had on society again.*

*Facebook itself sees stories as the future and says one billion of them are shared on its platform every day but has so far not being able to monetise them as much as its other ad inventory.*

*Still important to note though, that Instagram stories in no way impact how the Instagram algorithm works; meaning that even if you post 100 stories a day, this will not favour your profile. Whilst, posting regularly Instagram posts will help brands feature higher in users' timelines and it won't downrank people who post a lot.*

*Therefore, my tips are to:*

*1. Use Instagram Posts frequently to keep your audience engaged and to potentially attract new followers to your community,*

*2. Use Instagram Stories to feed extra, unfiltered content to the people that follow you*

2. Based on your experience, is the use of posts on IG more or less effective than IG stories?

*Instagram posts and stories should not be considered mutually exclusive. They both serve different purposes and should be used in different ways to build your brand.*

*In my experience, Instagram posts allow you to reach more people, simply because they do not disappear within 24 hours. However, Instagram stories allow me to share more amateur snackable pieces of content that show my true self – this is because you are basically ‘live-streaming’ on a day-to-day your life behind the scenes. People increasingly crave content, and Instagram stories are the quickest and easiest way to give people that without too much fuss.*

3. As an influencer, do you think that Instagram is fundamental for the launch of a new brand? Or, is it possible today to do without it and for what reasons?

*I believe that before anyone goes off and launches another social media channel, because they think it’s the best thing to do for a brand –they should stop and rethink their actions, before moving forward. When launching a new brand, I feel that people often get lost in the sea of options that exist nowadays to promote a brand – resulting in brands forgetting what their main purpose was.*

*It’s important that before a brand starts speaking with an audience, that they have a clear view on what their values and their ambitions are. Once you’ve ticked this box, you can then develop a marketing strategy where you consider all of the best tools that are available nowadays that can help you achieve that ambition. Not every single product or service on the planet has to be on Instagram to sell– maybe Instagram is not even the right place for you to advertise your brand or you might not be reaching the right audience.*

*Once you have identified the channels that best fit your brand, I recommend that a strategy is developed for each. Things to keep in mind are: 1. What you will be using the channel for 2. What do you want to say? 3. Who are you speaking to?*

*Lastly, do not expect to build a loyal community of followers overnight. Building an organic community takes time and with Facebook increasingly changing their algorithms, organic social reach is almost dead. Which means that a balance between organic and paid posts will be necessary to reach more people.*

4. According to you, in the current scenario, would you launch a new brand that identifies with your person using only IG (stories, posts, IGTV) as a means of promotion? Alternatively, based on your experience, which tools would you use?

*Brands cannot survive simply by relying on rented platforms (i.e. Instagram). Increasingly brands need to*

*understand that they need to build their own platforms too in order to succeed in the competitive world we now live in. Having a website and an Instagram page is no longer enough, brands need to start working on building engaging newsletters, catalogs, blogs and kiosks, as they are all important assets within a brand's overall owned media portfolio. Despite platforms like Facebook and Instagram allow you to reach huge audiences (mainly if you pay for it), they are rented, you do not own them. Whilst owned media assets are directly controlled by the brand. Nobody else.*

5. Considering the way in which the influencers and celebrities indicated have exploited self-narration through Instagram to enhance their brand, do you think there are equally effective tools?

*For social media influencers, Instagram has played a vital role in the success of these brands. I do not believe that there are tools as effective for social media influencers right now.*

6. If the story of the brand were not also the person's story (endorsement or testimonial of the brand), would it have the same effect on the purchase intention, in your opinion?

*I increasingly believe that people buy into people and not into brands. This is often why brands partner with endorsers and influencers - because they can borrow values from the best talent – helping brands to build credibility and trust in a world that is increasingly lacking both.*

*Scarcity of trust towards social platforms with the rise of fake news, clickbait articles and bots, have led influencer marketing to be a new era of social networking - one that is more about human connection as opposed to information consumption. It's one reason why the influencer marketing industry is on the rise, expected to grow by 41% to 6.5bn in 2019. Brands are looking to work with social media influencers who have developed deep connections with their audience.*

*Forbes actually found that 92% of people trust an influencer more than a traditional advertiser. This means that people buy their products because they trust them. If you remove influencers away from their brand – then no, there would be no purchase intention there, because there is no credibility.*

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### **5.1.7 Interview Six: Vera Arrivabene, Co-founder of Brand Vibi Venice (20 May 2019)**

1. Based on your experience and your role in the industry, is storytelling - in particular storytelling using IG stories - a crucial factor for visibility and notoriety?

*Based on my experience, the answer is yes. IG stories are now like a post, and both are crucial for brand visibility. These are activities that can be carried out by Instagram accounts, both my own as a founder, and my sister's, and the brand's. For example, I have fewer followers than VIBI's Instagram, but linking all the accounts has played a crucial influence on sales. My sister Viola has more followers even than the VIBI account.*

2. Based on your experience, is the use of posts on IG more or less effective than IG stories, in storytelling centred round human brands on Instagram?

*Looking at my Insights, for example, I noticed that one of my posts was viewed by 19,000 people while a IG story of 3000. So, it depends on the content. It is good that the two modalities go hand in hand, but the post was probably more effective because it is not certain that of the 3000 people who watched my IG Story that all of them lingered and watched the whole story. Moreover, IG stories are temporary, while posts are permanent; therefore, a post assumes greater value at the level of contracts, as an influencer. Actually, recently the IG swipe up function has been added which allows you to link directly to the purchase of the displayed product, so this could have a positive effect on sales.*

3. As an influencer, as well as the owner of the VIBI brand, how do you think IG Stories has influenced and will continue to influence the purchase intention of Instagram users in respect to your brand? How much does it affect your market share?

*In my opinion it affects things a lot. In our case, having started as a Dior Ambassador, it has brought us visibility and notoriety which we have used to promote our brand. Instagram is essential, so much so that up until now we haven't used any other social media network besides Instagram. Consumers, through the IG stories, can see the narration of the brand and develop the propensity to purchase.*

4. Considering the way in which influencers and celebrity endorsers on Instagram have exploited self-narrative tools on Instagram to enhance their brand, do you think there are equally effective tools?

*Surely there are also other ways. In fact, for our brand we will soon entrust the communication to an agency that intends to expand the tools of brand storytelling to social media other than Instagram.*

5. If the story of the brand were not also the person's story (endorsement or testimonial of the brand), would it have the same effect on the purchase intention, in your opinion?

*Using other forms of advertising, we would most likely still have achieved notoriety and visibility owing to that fact that we belong to an aristocratic family connected to the former royal family of Italy, but it would have taken more time. Thanks to Instagram Storytelling things went much more quickly.*

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### **5.1.8 Summary of the Qualitative Survey**

In summary, a number of key elements storytelling on Instagram which have emerged from the qualitative survey are as follows:

- A use of brand storytelling through Instagram is fundamental for brands seeking to market products to social media users, namely Millennials;
- The same thing cannot be said for all instances, since, for example, in the case of launching a new brand, the effectiveness of Instagram, rather than of traditional channels, such as TV or print, depends on the nature of the merchandise and the public to which it is addressed;
- It is not the case that IG stories are more effective than the use of posts in relation to purchase intentions in all contexts.
- Instagram is important for the launch and positioning of a new brand, but not essential. It is, instead, only representative of a component of an overall communication strategy that could also be based on different brand storytelling tools, including YouTube;
- The brand stories that are also the stories of individuals have both pros and cons for brands. On one hand, the association of the brand with its creator, or endorser, increases its value, especially if it is linked to a credible celebrity who embodies the brand. In this respect, as evidenced by influencers, the effectiveness of storytelling through Instagram exceeds that of traditional advertising. On the other hand, linking the image of a brand to a person can be limiting and reduce its flexibility;
- To maximise purchase intentions, it is necessary from brands to concentrate on platforms that speed up consumers' purchases. From this point of view, if it is true that Instagram allows consumers to become involved with brands through storytelling, the defect of this tool is that it does not allow immediate and direct purchase on the platform, as it requires connection to an additional platform.

## **5.2 The Descriptive Quantitative Research**

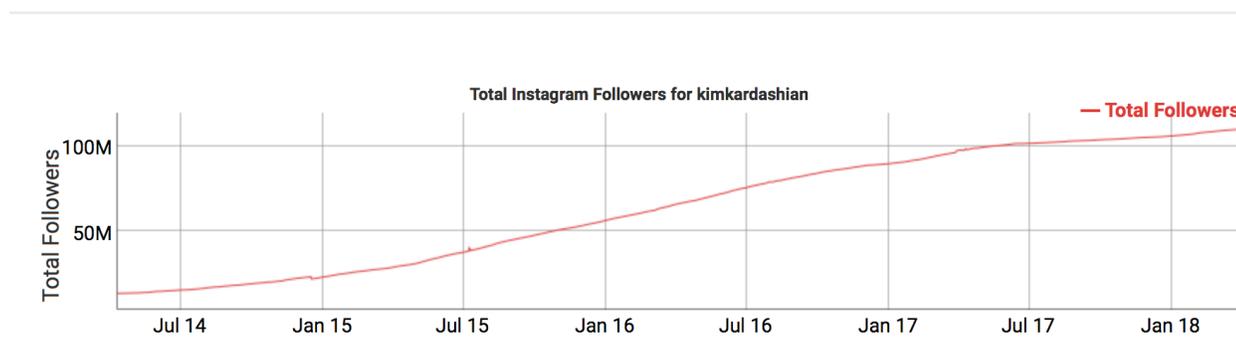
Following the qualitative research, which has allowed me to identify the drivers of purchase intentions triggered by digital storytelling, I aimed to quantify the relationship which is formed between consumers and brands through the mechanisms of storytelling in the form of a survey on the impact of the use of Instagram, in particular the use of IG stories.

The research focussed not only on the human brands analysed in Chapter Four - Chiara Ferragni and Cristiano Ronaldo - but also on other brands, particularly those from the world of fashion, which are characterised by the fact that the creator of the brand coincides with the brand itself and, in doing so, tells one's story through storytelling which refers to one's own identity.

### 5.2.1.KKW Beauty

KKM Beauty is the cosmetics brand launched in 2017 by American celebrity and influencer, Kim Kardashian West, a figure who has an enormous impact on social media, and can be said to focus almost exclusively on self-promotion through personal storytelling.

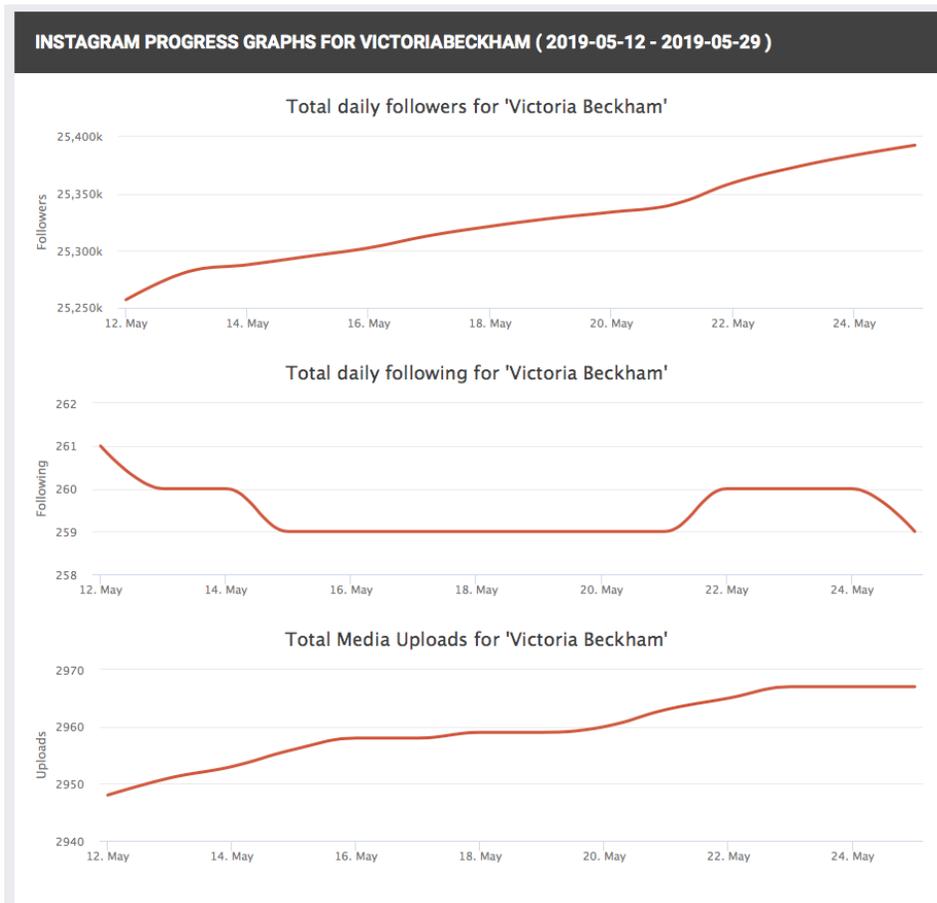
**Figure 41. Total Instagram Followers for Kim Kardashian (2018)**



### 5.2.1.ii Victoria Beckham

Victoria Beckham started her career as a Spice Girl after answering an ad for young women who were that was placed in British industry magazine. After selling more than 85 million records with the pop group and marrying soccer star David Beckham in 1999, she reinvented herself as a fashion star, and was featured on the April 2008 cover of British Vogue, before debuting her fashion line in New York in September that year. Beckham's brand can be said to take advantage of the reputation and international fame of its creator, who through her use of social media, and in particular Instagram, has encouraged the steady growth of her eponymous brand.

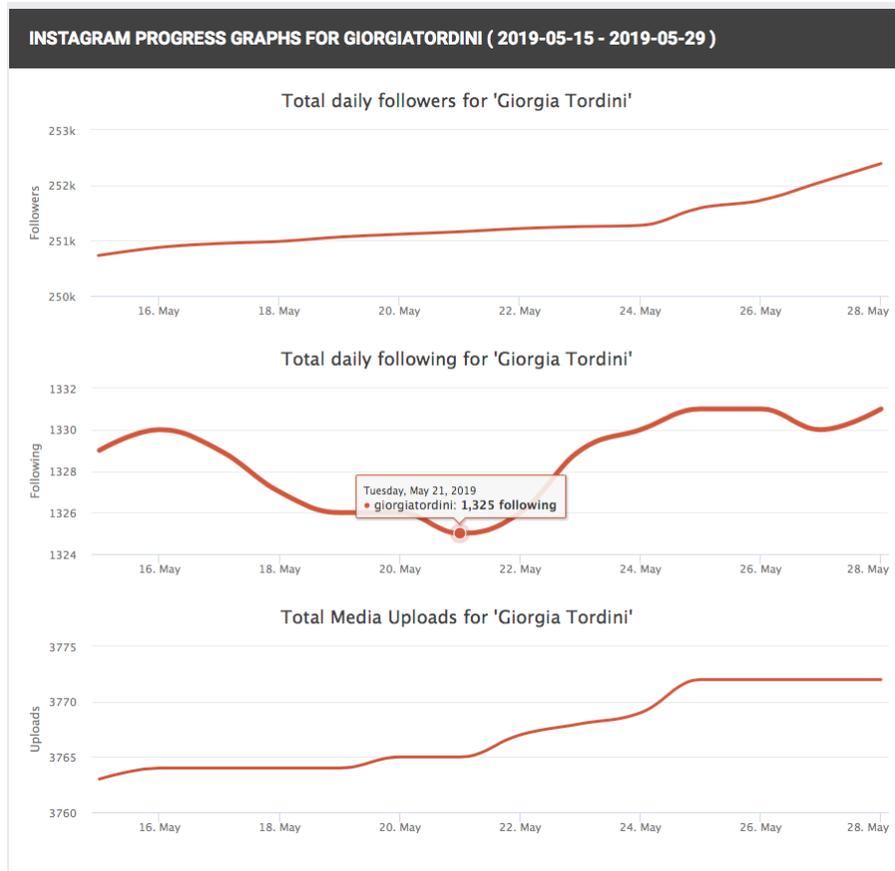
**Figure 42. Instagram Progress Graphs for Victoria Beckham - (2019)**



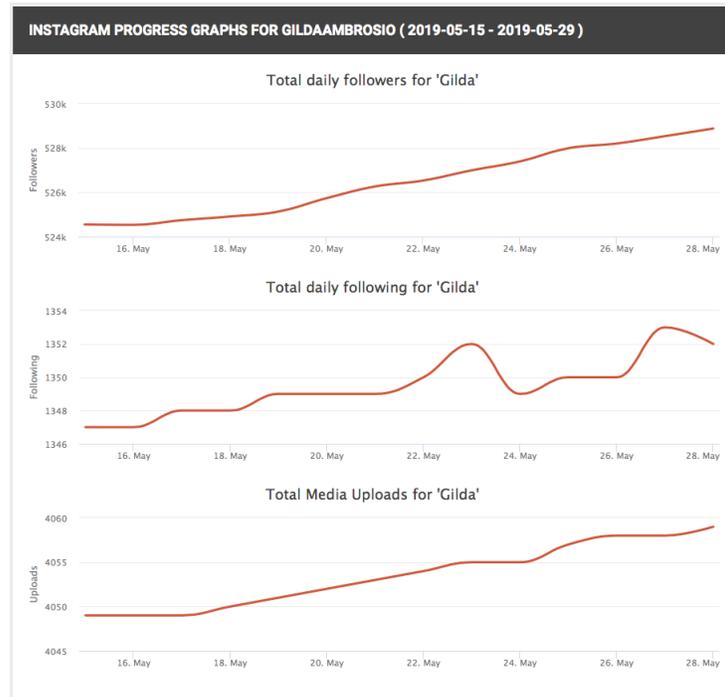
### 5.2.1.iii Gilda Ambrosio and Giorgia Tordini

The Attico is a brand created in 2016 by Gilda Ambrosio and Giorgia Tordini, two influencers and icons of street style, who, focussing on the strengths of their personal style, have created a brand that also makes use of brand storytelling as an ongoing narrative of the daily lives of its creators.

**Figure 43. Instagram Progress Graphs for Giorgia Tordini (2019)**



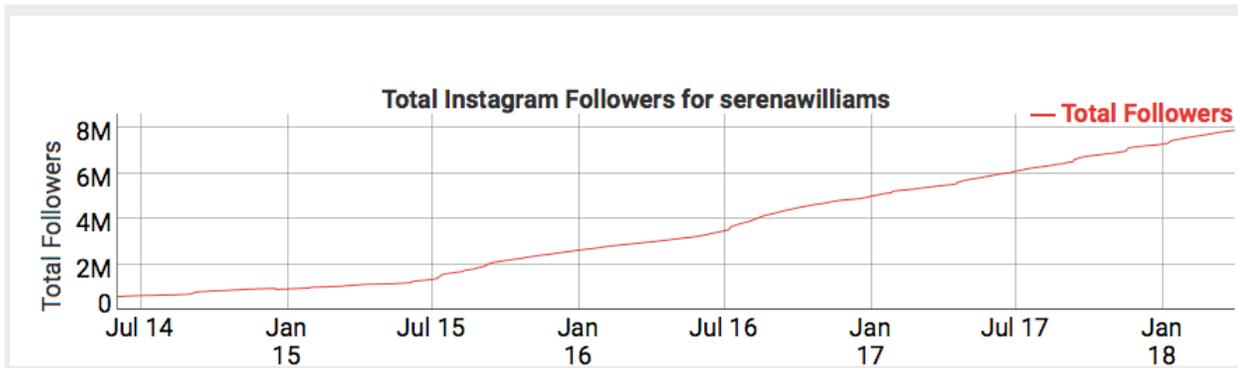
**Figure 44. Instagram Progress Graphs for Gilda Ambrosio (2019)**



### 5.2.1.iv Serena Williams

S by Serena is the brand created in 2018 by the tennis champion, Serena Williams, who is already well-known for her sporting feats and, therefore, had already acquired a huge pool of followers. Counting on this relevance and fame gained as a top athlete, Serena decided to launch her direct to consumer fashion brand, in addition to her own capital company. The champion makes the use of digital touchpoints and, in particular, Instagram for the promotion of her brand.

**Figure 45. Total Instagram Followers for Serena Williams (2018)**



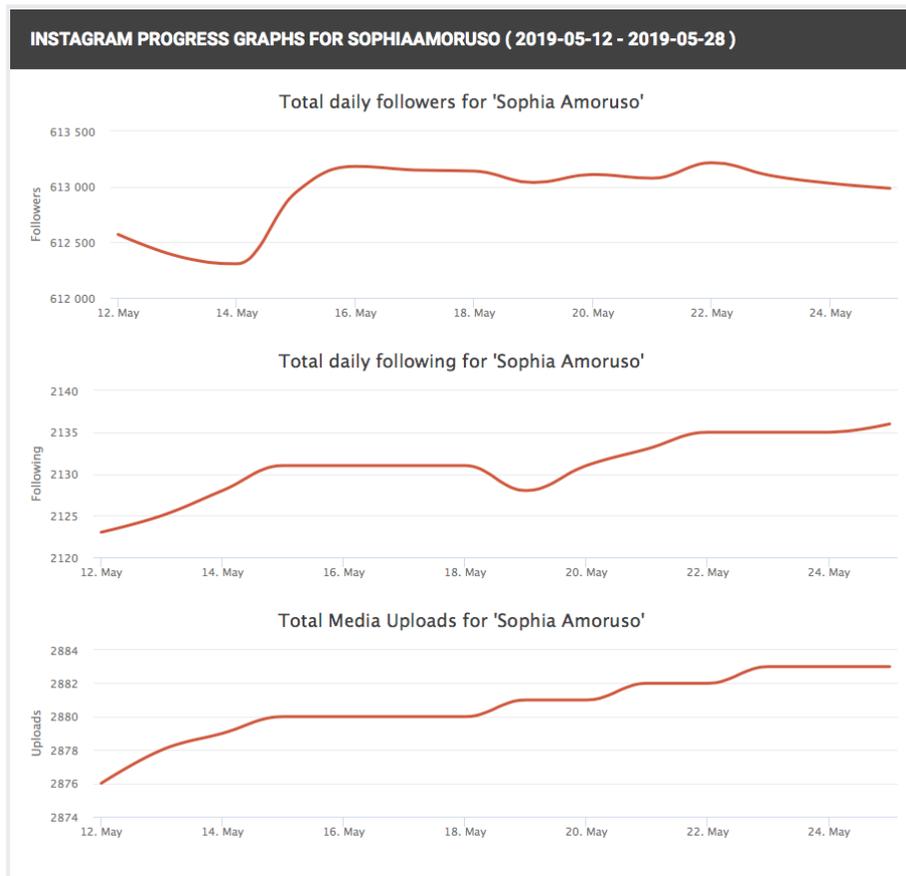
**Figure 46. Instagram Stats Summary/User Summary for Serena Williams (2018)**

INSTAGRAM STATS SUMMARY / USER SUMMARY (2018-03-19 - 2018-04-02)							
DATE		FOLLOWERS		FOLLOWING		MEDIA	
2018-03- Mon	+3,689	7,827,991	-	25	+1	1,115	
2018-03- Tue	+6,605	7,834,596	-	25	-	1,115	
2018-03- Wed	+2,192	7,836,788	-	25	-	1,115	
2018-03- Thu	+9,999	7,846,787	-	25	+2	1,117	
2018-03- Fri	+2,107	7,848,894	-	25	-	1,117	
2018-03- Sun	+13,330	7,862,224	-	25	-	1,117	
2018-03- Tue	+10,222	7,872,446	-	25	+2	1,119	
2018-03- Wed	+3,423	7,875,869	-	25	+1	1,120	
2018-04- Sun	+13,032	7,888,901	-	25	-	1,120	
2018-04- Mon	+4,331	7,893,232	🔴 LIVE	25	+1	1,121	
<b>DAILY AVERAGE</b>	<b>+5,457</b>		--		<b>+1</b>		
<b>MONTHLY AVERAGE</b>	<b>+163,710</b>		--		<b>+30</b>		

### 5.2.1.v Sophia Amoruso

Nastygal is a vintage fashion brand created by Sophia Amoruso in 2006, at a time when social media was still in its infancy and she had a non-existent following online. However, by bringing to success the brand in question, she has also personally reached the status of celebrity. Amoruso has contributed to the strength of her fashion brand through storytelling in order to increase sales of the brand, in addition to the storytelling she has undertaken in service of the publication of a book and the creation of her own autobiographical series on Netflix.

**Figure 47. Instagram Progress Graph for Sophia Amoruso (2019)**



### 5.2.2 The Questionnaire

Following the qualitative research that allowed me to consider the impact of the use of Instagram and, in particular, the strategic employment of IG stories as tools of brand storytelling, with consideration given to the CDJ, I formulated a questionnaire aimed at quantifying the implications on intention to buy.

The assumptions from which this research was born are respectively:

1. In cases where the brand identifies itself so deeply with the subject that creates it and shapes it in its image and likeness, so as to make the storytelling and the narration of its own person a fundamental aspect for the success of the brand and of the products themselves, is value added which then influences consumers' experience?
2. Is it possible to underestimate the authenticity of brands and their representatives, even if it has no other purpose than to serve the interests of the company?

### **2.2.2.i The Method**

The questionnaire, which was devised based on this line of questioning, was administered to a sample of 362 individuals, of heterogeneous age, with the aim of understanding the impact of storytelling on purchase intentions and relationship formation with brands. Those surveyed may be divided into three categories, namely: Generation Z (up to 23 years); Generation Y (between 23-38); and, finally, Generation X (over 38 years).

The object of this thesis is to investigate the usage of the mechanisms of narration on Instagram and, in particular, IG Stories, with respect to the construction of a brand story, and the subsequent influence on purchase intentions and the creation of strong emotional attachments between consumers and brands which result from such activities. In as much, the research undertaken in this section seeks to quantify this relationship between storytelling and purchase intentions through a survey on consumer perceptions of brands that make use of personal storytelling techniques, with particular attention given to the case studies analysed in Chapter Four

Thus, the questionnaire aims to verify the effectiveness of brand storytelling through the use of Instagram and, in particular, the use of IG Stories, IGTV, and static posts as determinants of purchase intention.

Furthermore, the questions in the questionnaire seek to quantify the attractiveness of brands and how much of that appeal is owing to its founder and identification of the brand with him or herself in the form of narratives of self that are also brand narratives.

The questionnaire was first administered on 10 April 2019 and the data was collected until 30 May 2019. This time frame coincided with the launch of significant collaborations between some of the brands analysed and partner firms, such as: the launch of the Chiara Ferragni capsule collection for Lancôme; the purchase of Fenty by Rihanna brand by LVMH; and the launch of The Attico's capsule collection for Re/done.com.

The questions were designed to target the way in which the brand story influences purchase intentions in consumers, through the creation of a process of identification and emotional involvement in the consumer.

The questionnaire investigates how the way consumers react to the brand story impacts purchase intention, generating, in either the short or long term, the inclination to purchase.

### **2.2.2.ii The Sections of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire is structured as four sections:

#### **Section I: General Information**

- Gender
- Age
- Education
- Occupation
- City of Residence

#### **Section II: Storytelling and Brand Recall**

- Are you a user of social media, including Instagram?
- Which of these brands do you associate most with the word ‘success’?
- Which of these brands do you pay most attention to on Instagram?
- Was the use of Instagram decisive for the positioning of the brand you indicated to be the most relevant?
- In the promotion of which of these brands do you think Instagram is most effective?
- How would you assess the ability of the brand promotion tools mentioned in creating emotional involvement?
- Have you ever purchased a product from any of these brands for yourself or for others?
- If yes, why?
- Has the association between the brand and its celebrity representative influenced your purchase / non-purchase decision?
- If you have never purchased a branded product, why?
- On average, how many products from the brands mentioned do you purchase in a year?

#### **Section III: Purchase Factors**

- Which of these brands do you like the most?
- Who is the founder of the brands included whose personal history interests you the most?
- Which of these brands would you recommend to your friends and acquaintances?

## Section IV: Practical Applications for the Case Studies Analysed

- If the Chiara Ferragni Collection/ The Ferragnez brand had a different endorser, how much interest would you have towards it?
- If the CR7 brand had a different endorser, how much interest would you have towards it?
- If behind the indicated brands there was not the celebrity endorser, but an ordinary person, how much interest in your opinion could they arouse?
- If you worked in the marketing sector of one of the brands indicated what action would you recommend to make brand storytelling more effective through Instagram?

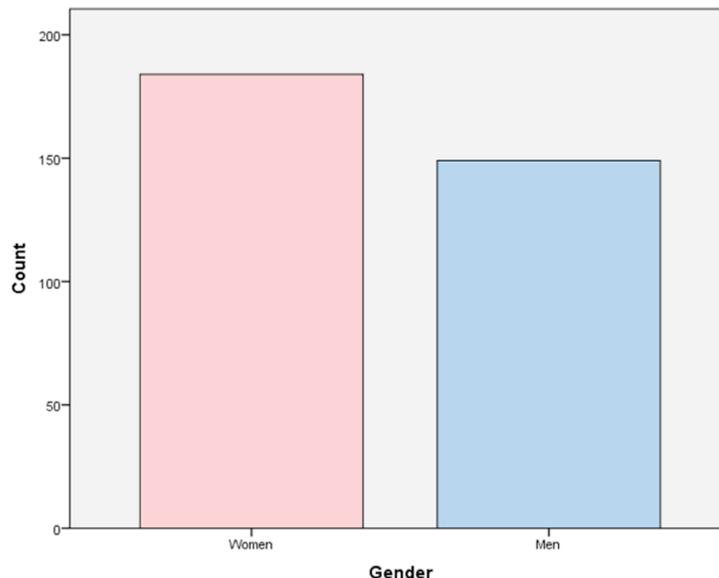
### 2.2.2.iii Findings of the Questionnaire

The findings the the questionnaire will be summarised below in the following figures:

### 2.2.2.iv Section I: General Information

1. Gender (332 answers)

**Figure 48. Gender Distribution - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

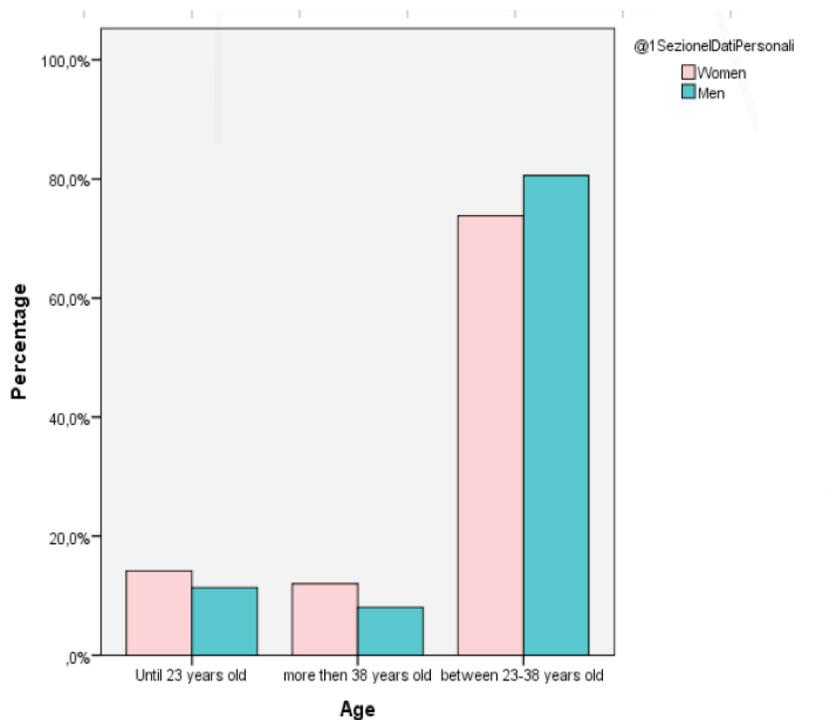


**Figure 49. Table Gender Distribution - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Female	184	55,3	55,3	55,3
	Male	149	44,7	44,7	100,0
	Totale	333	100,0	100,0	

2. Age (332 answers)

**Figure 50. Contingency Graph Gender and Age - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**



**Figure 51. Contingency Table Gender and Age - Personal Elaboration on Author SPSS (2019)**

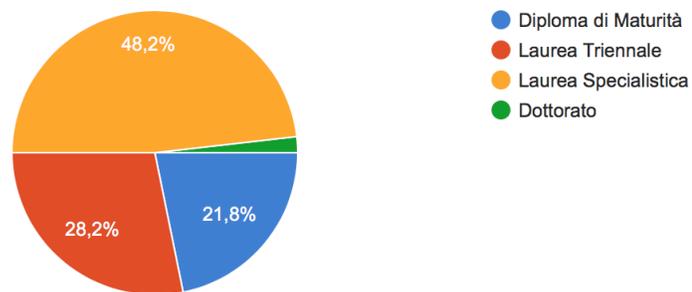
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		Age			Total
		until 23 years old	more then 38 years old	between 23-38 years old	
	Female	26	22	135	183
	Male	17	12	120	149
Total		43	34	255	332

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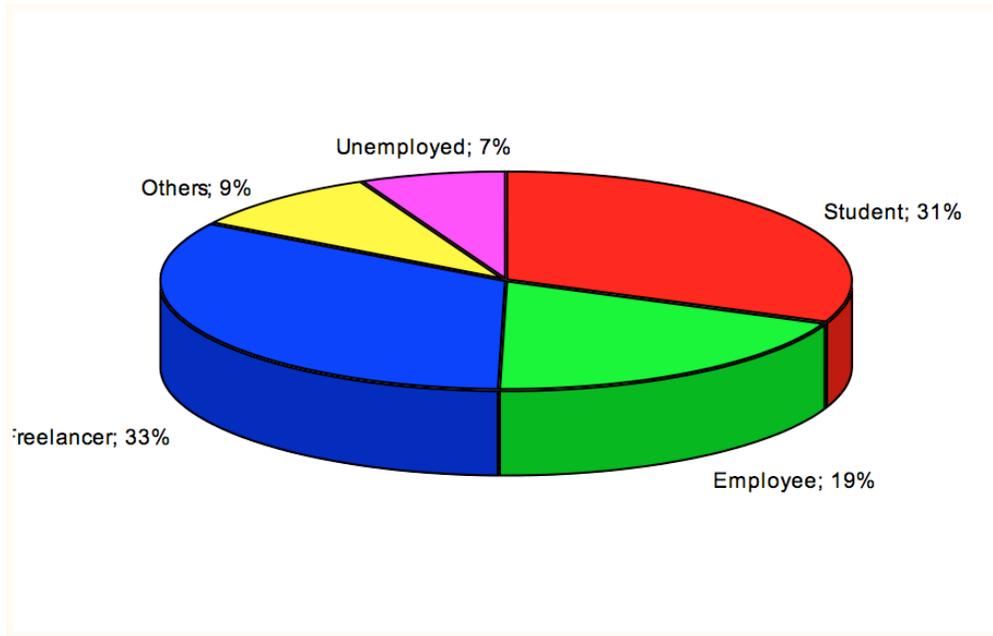
3. Education (330 answers)

**Figure 52. Distribution of Average Level of Education - Personal Elaboration by Author on Excel (2019)**



3. Occupation (332 answers)

**Figure 53. Reported Occupation of Questionnaire Participants - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**



**Figure 54. Occupational Frequency Table - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

Category	Frequency table: Profession	
	Count	Percent
Student	104	31,3253
Employee	63	18,9759
Freelancer	111	33,43373
Unemployed	23	6,92771
Others	31	9,33735

5. City of Residence (332 answers)

Figure 55. *City of Residence of Respondents - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)*

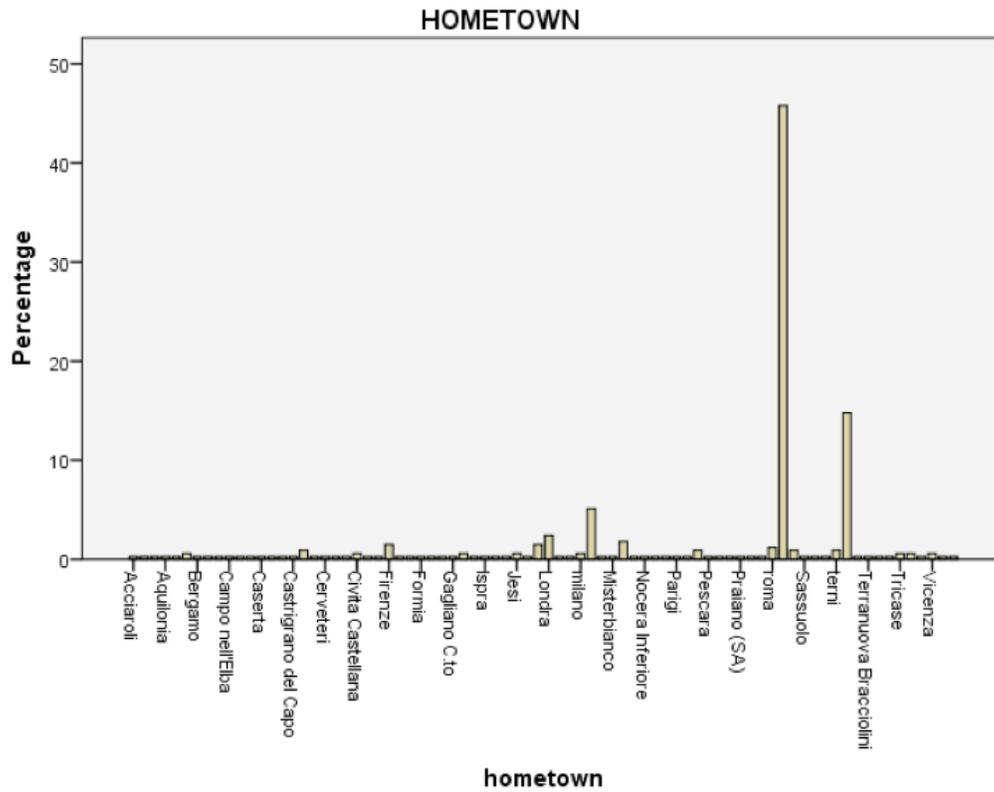
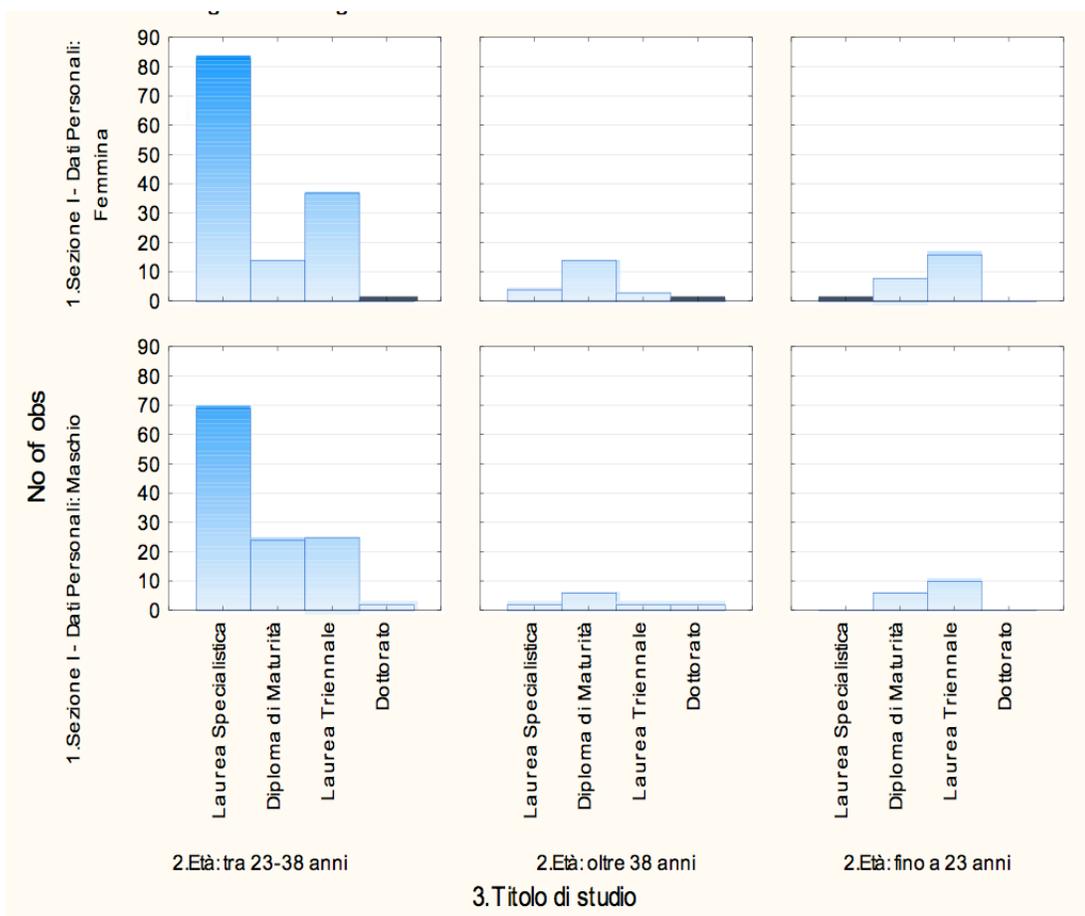


Figure 56. *Highest Level of Education Achieved* - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)



**Figure 57. Frequency Table: Gender, Age, Highest Level of Education Achieved - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

Summary Frequency Table							Measur elemento self
Marked cells have counts > 10							
1.Gender	2.Age	3.Level of Study Master Degree	3.Level of Study High School Diploma	3.Level of Study Laurea Triennale	3.Level of Study PHD	Row Totals	
Female	tra 23-38 anni	83	14	37	1	135	
Female	oltre 38 anni	4	14	3	1	22	
Female	fino a 23 anni	1	8	16	0	25	
<b>Total</b>		<b>88</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>182</b>	
Male	tra 23-38 anni	69	24	25	2	120	
Male	oltre 38 anni	2	6	2	2	12	
Male	fino a 23 anni	0	6	10	0	16	
<b>Total</b>		<b>71</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>148</b>	
Column Total		159	72	93	6	330	

### 2.2.2.v Analysis Section I: Personal Information

As regards the section of the questionnaire on general information, of the 332 total respondents to the questionnaire, 55.3% of women and 44.7% of men are registered. Indeed, as far as gender is concerned, the sample can be said to be balanced. The largest age group represented is between 23 and 38 years, *Generation Y* (76.8%).

Respondents were mostly professionals (33.4%) and students (31.3%.) The remainder of those surveyed were office workers (19%), unemployed (6.9%), and finally 9.3% were marked "other".

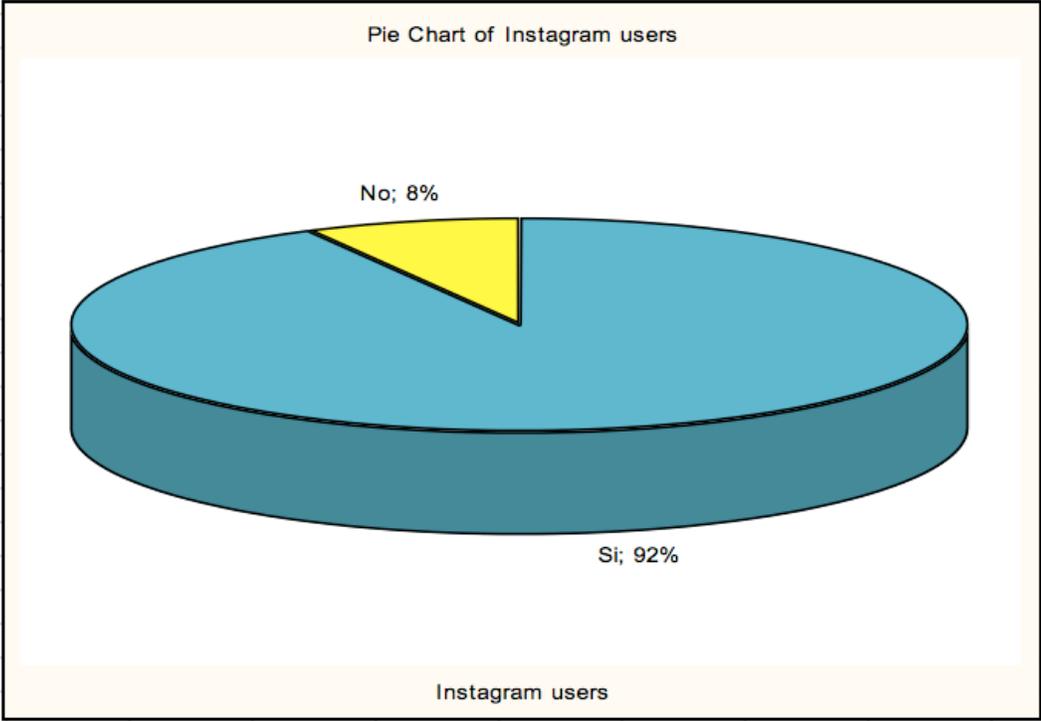
In regards to the distribution of educational qualifications, no significant differences emerge between the genders. The frequency of those aged 23-38 who only hold a high school diploma is slightly higher in men (81%) than in women (74%.) For those over 38 and under 23, the figure is lower than in other groups surveyed. 94.32% of women in the 23-38 age group have a Master's Degree, while men 97.18% in the same age group have a Master's Degree.

Most of the samples come from Rome, which amounts to 45.8% of the entire sample, followed by Terni which constitutes 14.8%, Milan at 5%, and London which represents 2.4%. All the other cities of origin are around 0.3%.

2.2.2.vi Section II: Storytelling and Brand Recall

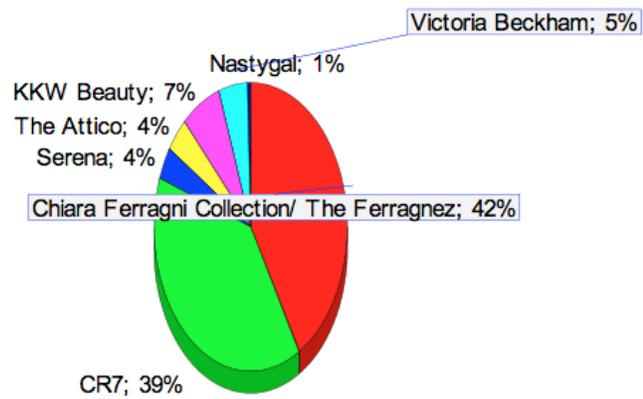
1. Are you a user of social media, including Instagram? (332 replies)

Figure 58. Instagram Users - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)



2. Which of these brands do you associate most with the word "Success"? (332 answers)

**Figure 59. Brand Distribution of Respondents Perceptions of Success - Personal Elaboration of Author On SPSS (2019)**

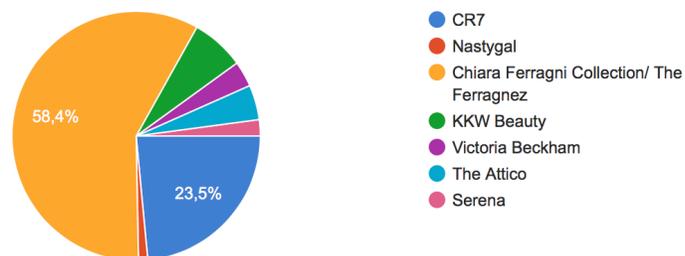


**Figure 60. Brand Distribution Table of Success Perception - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

Category		
	Count	Percent
Chiara Ferragni Collection/ The Ferragnez	138	41,56627
CR7	129	38,85542
Serena	12	3,61446
The Attico	13	3,91566
KKW Beauty	22	6,62651
Victoria Beckham	16	4,81928
Nastygal	2	0,60241
Missing	0	0,00000

3. Which of these brands do you pay most attention to on Instagram? (332 answers)

**Figure 61. Brand Preferences on Instagram - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**



**Figure 62. Frequency Table for Brand Preferences - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

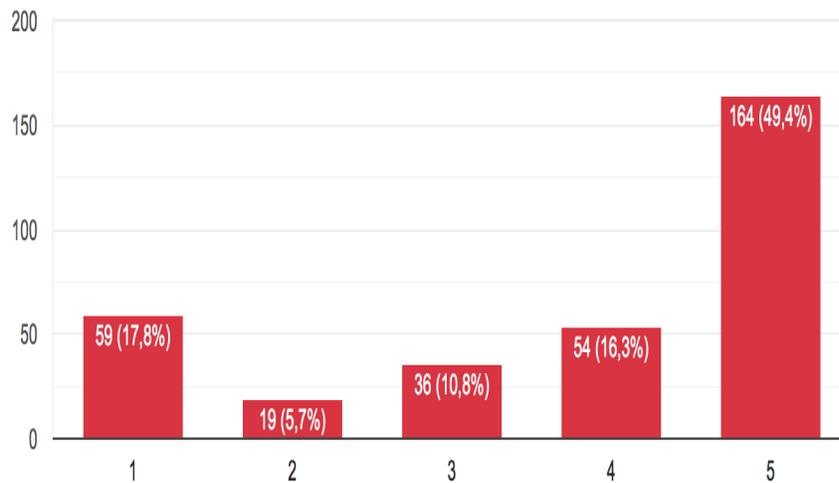
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Category	Frequency table	
	Count	Percent
Chiara Ferragni Collection/ The Ferragnez	194	58,43373
KKW Beauty	23	6,92771
CR7	78	23,49398
Nastygal	4	1,20482
Victoria Beckham	11	3,31325
The Attico	15	4,51807
Serena	7	2,10843
Missing	0	0,00000

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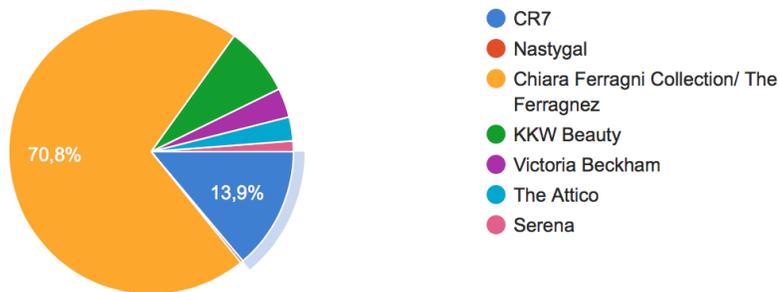
4. Was the use of Instagram decisive for the positioning of the brand indicated by you as being the most relevant? (332 answers)

**Figure 63. Brand Positioning on Instagram - Personal Elaboration of Author on Excel (2019)**



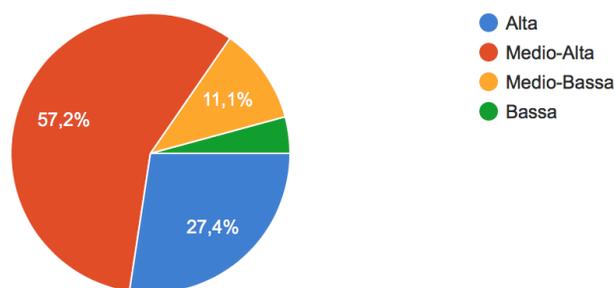
5. In the promotion of which of these brands do you think Instagram is most effective?

**Figure 64. Brand Promotion on Instagram - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**



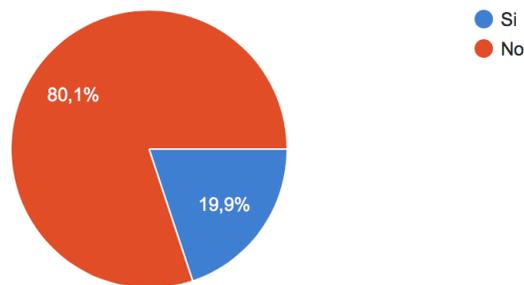
6. How do you assess the ability of the brand promotion tools mentioned in creating emotional involvement?  
(332 answers)

**Figure 65. Emotional Involvement of Brands on Instagram - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**



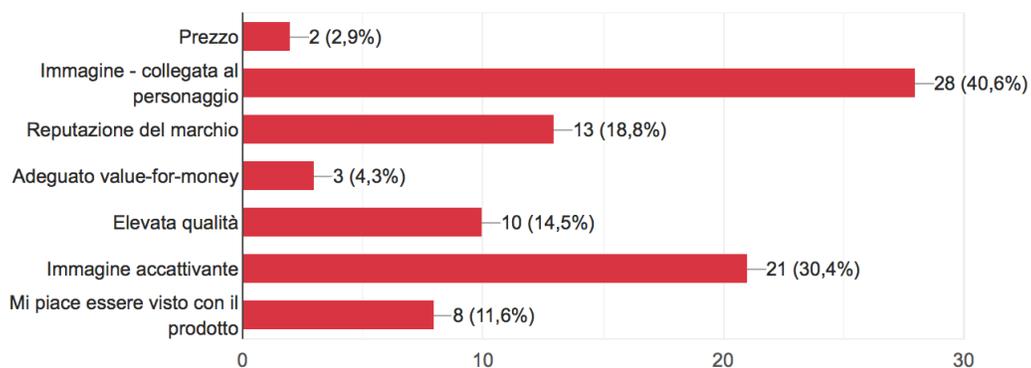
7. Have you ever purchased a product from any of these brands for yourself or for others? (332 answers)

**Figure 66. Purchases Intentions - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**



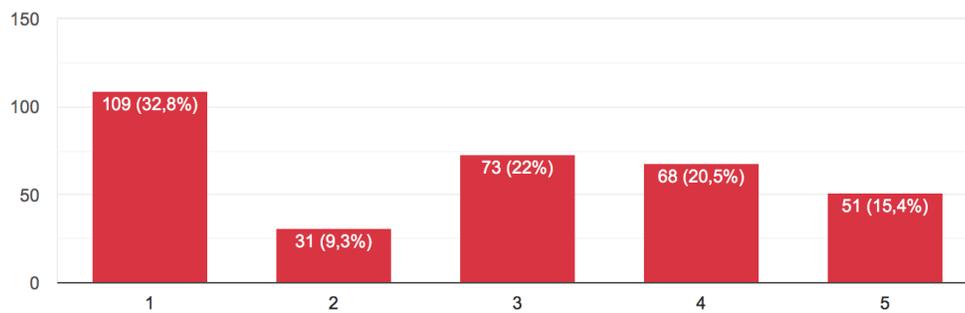
8. If yes, why? (69 answer)

**Figure 67. Reasons Given for Purchases - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**



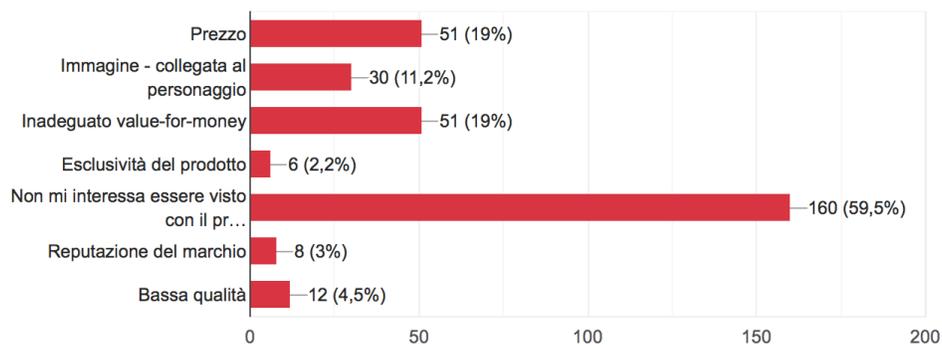
9. Has the association between the brand and its celebrity representative influenced your purchase / non-purchase decision? (332 answers)

**Figure 68. Influence of Celebrity Endorsers on Purchase Intentions - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**



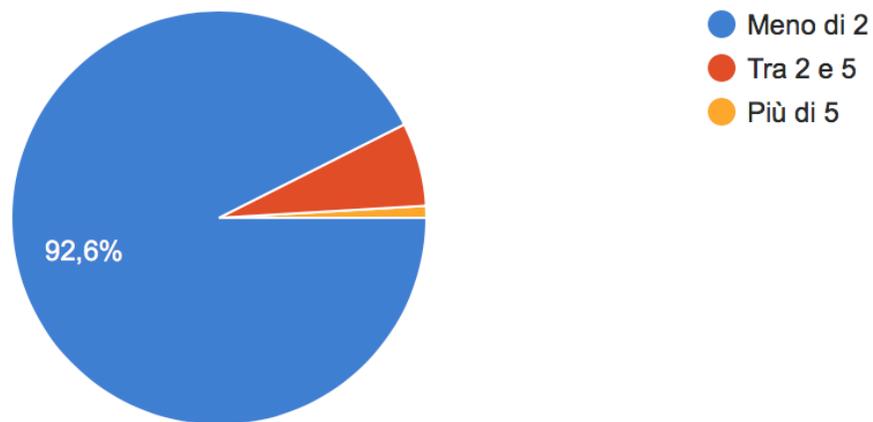
10. If you have never purchased a branded product, why? (269 answers)

**Figure 69. Motivations Behind the Purchase of a Celebrity Backed Brand or Product- Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS**



11. On average, how many products from the brands mentioned do you purchase in a year? (323 answers)

**Figure 70. Analysis of the Number of Products Bought Annually - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**



## 2.2.2.vii Analysis Section II: Storytelling and Brand Recall

92% of respondents appear to be active users of Instagram, with only 8% of respondents reporting to not use social media.

The use of Instagram, for both males and females, reveals the distribution of usage by age, as is illustrated in the figure below:

**Figure 71. Instagram Usage: Analysed by Age and Gender - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

Summary Frequency Table (datisez1)					
Marked cells have counts > 10					
(Marginal summaries are not marked)					
	@1SezioneIDatiPersonali	@2Età	Instagram users Si	Instagram users No	Row Totals
Count	Femmina	tra 23-38 anni	131	4	135
Column Percent			77,98%	26,67%	73,77%
Count	Femmina	oltre 38 anni	13	9	22
Column Percent			7,74%	60,00%	12,02%
Count	Femmina	fino a 23 anni	24	2	26
Column Percent			14,29%	13,33%	14,21%
Count	Total		168	15	183
Column Percent			54,90%	57,69%	
Count	Maschio	tra 23-38 anni	114	6	120
Column Percent			82,61%	54,55%	80,54%
Count	Maschio	oltre 38 anni	7	5	12
Column Percent			5,07%	45,45%	8,05%
Count	Maschio	fino a 23 anni	17	0	17
Column Percent			12,32%	0,00%	11,41%
Count	Total		138	11	149
Column Percent			45,10%	42,31%	
Count	Column Total		306	26	332

91.8% of women use Instagram. As is visible in the table above, the vast majority of women in the 23-38 age group use (91%). 78% of Instagram users in total are in the 23-38 age group. In the same age group, those who do not use Instagram only accounts for 26% of respondents. While the highest percentage of non-users is found in the age group over 38 years.

**Figure 72. Cross-referenced Instagram Usage: Female Users - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

2-Way Summary Table: Observed Frequencies (datisez1) Subtable within: @1SezionelDatiPersonali:Femmina Marked cells have counts > 10			
@2Età	Instagram users Si	Instagram users No	Row Totals
tra 23-38 anni	131	4	135
Column %	77,98%	26,67%	
oltre 38 anni	13	9	22
Column %	7,74%	60,00%	
fino a 23 anni	24	2	26
Column %	14,29%	13,33%	
Totals	168	15	183

It was conducted in the two previous tables that Chi-Square (df 2) = 36.21 is significant p value = 0.0000 < 0.05, this means that there is a strong relationship between age and the use of Instagram.

**Figure 73. Cross-referenced Chi Square Analysis of Instagram Usage: Female Users - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

Statistics: @2Età(3) x Instagram users(2) (datisez1) Subtable within: @1SezionelDatiPersonali:Femmina			
Statistic	Chi-square	df	p
Pearson Chi-square	36,20898	df=2	p=,00000
M-L Chi-square	23,87740	df=2	p=,00001

98% of males surveyed are Instagram users. 82.6% of male Instagram users are aged 23-38. Conversely, those who do not use it in the same age group are 54% of the 7% of men total who do not use the platform. For those aged over 38 years, 45.5% of males do not use Instagram.

**Figure 74. Cross-referenced Analysis of Instagram Usage: Male Users - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

2-Way Summary Table: Observed Frequencies (datisez1) Subtable within: @1SezioneIDatiPersonali:Maschio Marked cells have counts > 10			
@2Età	Instagram users Si	Instagram users No	Row Totals
tra 23-38 anni	114	6	120
Column %	82,61%	54,55%	
oltre 38 anni	7	5	12
Column %	5,07%	45,45%	
fino a 23 anni	17	0	17
Column %	12,32%	0,00%	
Totals	138	11	149

It was conducted in the two previous tables that Chi-Square (df 2) = 23 is significant p value = 0.00069 < 0.05, this means that there is a strong relationship between age and the use of Instagram.

**Figure 75. Cross-referenced Chi Square Analysis of Instagram Usage: Male Users - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

Statistics: @2Età(3) x Instagram users(2) (datisez1) Subtable within: @1SezioneIDatiPersonali:Maschio			
Statistic	Chi-square	df	p
Pearson Chi-square	22,97983	df=2	p=,00001
M-L Chi-square	14,55599	df=2	p=,00069

This means that the relationship between the use of Instagram and age is weaker in men than in women.

Subsequently, the distribution of frequencies on the perception of the success of brands was analysed. It is possible to note that 41.56% of those surveyed perceived Chiara Ferragni to be representative of a successful brand, while 38.85% saw the CR7 brand as being successful. The remainder varies between 0% and 6%.

**Figure 76. Perceptions of Success in Select Brands - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

---

	2-Way Summary Table: Observed Frequencies (datisez1)		
	Marked cells have counts > 10		
@8QualediquestibrandassocimaggiormenteallaparolaSuccess	@13Haimaiacquistatounprodottodi questibrandperteopera Si	@13Haimaiacquistatounprodottodi questibrandperteopera No	Row Totals
Chiara Ferragni Collection/ The Ferragnez	32	106	138
CR7	15	114	129
Serena	3	9	12
The Attico	7	6	13
KKW Beauty	4	18	22
Victoria Beckham	4	12	16
Nastygal	1	1	2
Totals	66	266	332

---

A cross analysis was carried out between the variable perception of the brand and the gender, the sample being balanced, the Chi-square is the result ( $df = 6$ ) = 95.7 very significant with a p value = 0.00001, in fact 32% of the total number of women sampled perceived Chiara Ferragni as embodying a successful brand, while males accounted for 8% of the total. The percentage is reversed for the CR7 brand where 30% of men perceived CR7 as a successful brand. The significance of the Chi-Framework obviously depends on the product nature of the product.

**Figure 77. Perceptions of Success in Select Brands: By Gender - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

	2-Way Summary Table: Observed Frequencies (datisez1)			Row Totals
	Marked cells have counts > 10			
@8QualediquestibrandassocimaggiormenteallaparolaSuccess	@1SezionelDatiPersonali Femmina	@1SezionelDatiPersonali Maschio		
Chiara Ferragni Collection/ The Ferragnez	109	29		138
Column %	59,56%	19,46%		
Row %	78,99%	21,01%		
Total %	32,83%	8,73%		41,57%
CR7	29	100		129
Column %	15,85%	67,11%		
Row %	22,48%	77,52%		
Total %	8,73%	30,12%		38,86%
Serena	8	4		12
Column %	4,37%	2,68%		
Row %	66,67%	33,33%		
Total %	2,41%	1,20%		3,61%
The Attico	11	2		13
Column %	6,01%	1,34%		
Row %	84,62%	15,38%		
Total %	3,31%	0,60%		3,92%
KKW Beauty	15	7		22
Column %	8,20%	4,70%		
Row %	68,18%	31,82%		
Total %	4,52%	2,11%		6,63%
Victoria Beckham	9	7		16
Column %	4,92%	4,70%		
Row %	56,25%	43,75%		
Total %	2,71%	2,11%		4,82%
Nastygal	2	0		2
Column %	1,09%	0,00%		
Row %	100,00%	0,00%		
Total %	0,60%	0,00%		0,60%
Totals	183	149		332
Total %	55,12%	44,88%		100,00%

**Figure 78. Chi Square Analysis of Perceptions of Success in Select Brands - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

Statistic	Statistics: @8QualediquestibrandassocimaggiormenteallaparolaSuccess(7) x @1SezionelDatiPersonali(2) (datisez1)		
	Chi-square	df	p
Pearson Chi-square	95,69926	df=6	p=0,0000
M-L Chi-square	101,4718	df=6	p=0,0000

A cross tabulation has been built between the perception of the brand's success and the purchase of the product, also in this case the Chi-square (df = 6) = 17.52 is significant with a p value of 0.00755. This shows that there is a positive correlation between the perception of success and the willingness to buy a product.

**Figure 79. Chi Square Analysis of Perceptions of Success in Select Brands and Purchase Intentions - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

---

Statistics: @8QualediquestibrandassocimaggiormenteallaparolaSuccess(7) x @13Haimaiacquistatounprodottodiquestibrandperteopera(2) (datisez1)			
Statistic	Chi-square	df	p
Pearson Chi-square	17,51992	df=6	p=,00755
M-L Chi-square	15,88216	df=6	p=,01440

---

In reference to question three, the most significant and strongest brand perceptions of those polled was Chiara Ferragni with 58.3%, followed by CR7 at 23.9%. The other brands ranged from 2-6%.

Turning to question four, the use of Instagram for brand positioning was (49.4%) very significant, (16.3%) simply significant, and, finally, (17%) not relevant at all. This shows that not everyone agrees on the relevance of social media in brand positioning on the market.

In relation to question five, Instagram has been found, by the results of the study, to be most effective for the Chiara Ferragni brand, with 70.8% of respondents reporting to follow the brand’s promotional activities on the platform; followed by CR7 with 13.9%. This 70.8% should be multiplied by 49.4%, in order to take into due consideration those who perceive the importance of brand positioning on Instagram to be significant. Therefore, the actual quantitative significance of the 70.8% result becomes 35% of the total number of respondents.

Returning to questions three and five, in analysing the importance of social media for brands in their promotion, the cross analysis shows that only 50% of those who view Chiara Ferragni Collection’s Instagram as being important, in terms of promotion, have a positive assessment of the effectiveness of sales of the same brand. The phenomenon appears to be singular in that among all those who responded that the Ferragni brand took the greatest advantage of Instagram as a promotional platform, 40% of them believe that CR7’s usage of Instagram is more relevant. While those who answered CR7 for the promotion, only 3% changed course to Chiara Ferragni Collection.

**Figure 80. Brand Perceptions - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

	2-Way Summary Table: Observed Frequencies (datisez1)		
	Marked cells have counts > 10		
	@13Haimaiacquistatounprodottodi questibrandperteopera Si	@13Haimaiacquistatounprodottodi questibrandperteopera No	Row Totals
@9Qualetraquestibrandnellusodilnstagramèpertepiùrile			
Chiara Ferragni Collection/ The Ferragnez	41	153	194
Total %	12,35%	46,08%	58,43%
KKW Beauty	4	19	23
Total %	1,20%	5,72%	6,93%
CR7	10	68	78
Total %	3,01%	20,48%	23,49%
Nastygal	0	4	4
Total %	0,00%	1,20%	1,20%
Victoria Beckham	4	7	11
Total %	1,20%	2,11%	3,31%
The Attico	6	9	15
Total %	1,81%	2,71%	4,52%
Serena	1	6	7
Total %	0,30%	1,81%	2,11%
Totals	66	266	332
Total %	19,88%	80,12%	100,00%

In reference to question six, 57% of the sample group stated that the usage of the brand promotion tools mentioned has lead to medium-high emotional involvement is 27.4%; high and medium-low emotional involvement come in at 11%.

As regards question seven, 80% of respondents purchased a product from the listed brands. The most effective linkage between perceptions of brand success and subsequent purchase comes from the Chiara Ferragni Collection brand; whereas, in CR7 there is a negative relationship between the effectiveness of the promotion and the act of purchase. 21.13% of those who have indicated the Ferragni brand as being effective in their promotions have also bought a Chiara Ferragni branded product, while 78.87% have not. The same is true for CR7. For the other brands listed, however, despite having a lower reported levels of promotional effectiveness, the percentages of those who buy the product rise to around 40%. This shows that purchases are made based on consumer familiarity with the product, and not based on promotional activities carried out on social networks.

**Figure 81. Instagram Usage by Influencers and Celebrities and Purchase Intentions - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

Summary Frequency Table (datisez1) Marked cells have counts > 10 (Marginal summaries are not marked)				
	@9QualetraquestibrandnellusodiInstagramèp erteipiùrile	@13Haimaiacquistatounprodottodi questibrandperteopera Sì	@13Haimaiacquistatounprodottodi questibrandperteopera No	Row Totals
Count	Chiara Ferragni Collection/ The Ferragnez	41	153	194
Row Percent		21,13%	78,87%	
Count	KKW Beauty	4	19	23
Row Percent		17,39%	82,61%	
Count	CR7	10	68	78
Row Percent		12,82%	87,18%	
Count	Nastygal	0	4	4
Row Percent		0,00%	100,00%	
Count	Victoria Beckham	4	7	11
Row Percent		36,36%	63,64%	
Count	The Attico	6	9	15
Row Percent		40,00%	60,00%	
Count	Serena	1	6	7
Row Percent		14,29%	85,71%	
Count	All Grps	66	266	332

Turning to question eight, the graph shows that the majority of respondents buy products because of their association with a specific public figure (40.6%), and an additional 30.4% of respondents make purchasing decisions based on captivating images. Between 14-18% of respondents are attentive to the quality of the product as it is linked to the reputation of the brand.

By crossing the purchase motivation with the actual purchase of the brand's products, 86% of those who consider the image appealing buy the product and 100% of those link the image to the product. This shows the effectiveness of promotional activities that make use of storytelling carried out on IG Stories and posts on the purchase intention of the consumers polled.

In reference to question nine, 32.8% of respondents do not consider the connection between purchase intention and celebrity to be important. 15.4% of those polled see the relationship between the purchase or non-purchase intention with the celebrity as being present. It should be noted, however, that 19.57% of the respondents have actually bought at least one product from the brands listed, but not all those who bought the product pay attention to the celebrity endorser. In fact, among those who have bought celebrity branded items, only 50.72% of respondents started that they bought the product on the basis of its connection with the celebrity.

**Figure 82. Instagram Usage and Purchase Intentions - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

Summary Frequency Table (datisez1)				
Marked cells have counts > 10 (Marginal summaries are not marked)				
	@9QualetraquestibrandnellusodiInstagramè erteipiùrile	@13Haimaiacquistatounprodottodi questibrandperteopera Si	@13Haimaiacquistatounprodottodi questibrandperteopera No	Row Totals
Count	Chiara Ferragni Collection/ The Ferragnez	41	153	194
Row Percent		21,13%	78,87%	
Count	KKW Beauty	4	19	23
Row Percent		17,39%	82,61%	
Count	CR7	10	68	78
Row Percent		12,82%	87,18%	
Count	Nastygal	0	4	4
Row Percent		0,00%	100,00%	
Count	Victoria Beckham	4	7	11
Row Percent		36,36%	63,64%	
Count	The Attico	6	9	15
Row Percent		40,00%	60,00%	
Count	Serena	1	6	7
Row Percent		14,29%	85,71%	
Count	All Grps	66	266	332

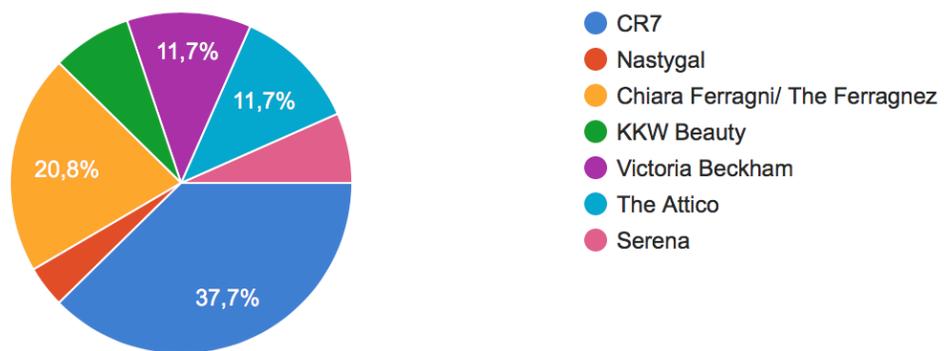
59.5% of respondents surveyed are not interested in being seen with a branded product from the brands listed; however, only 11.2% will not buy a product on the basis of its image being linked to the brand. Among all those who do not buy a product because they do not want to be seen with it in their possession, 90% are users of Instagram. This means that they are people informed about the product but storytelling has negatively affected their purchase intentions. Furthermore, all those who state that they would not buy a brand's offering because of their association with the image of a specific figure, such as a celebrity or influencer, are users of Instagram (100%).

In reference to the final question in this section, the number of products purchased annually is very low, as 92.6% of respondents buy less than two products of the products listed on the questionnaire per year.

### 5.2.2.viii Section III: Purchasing factors

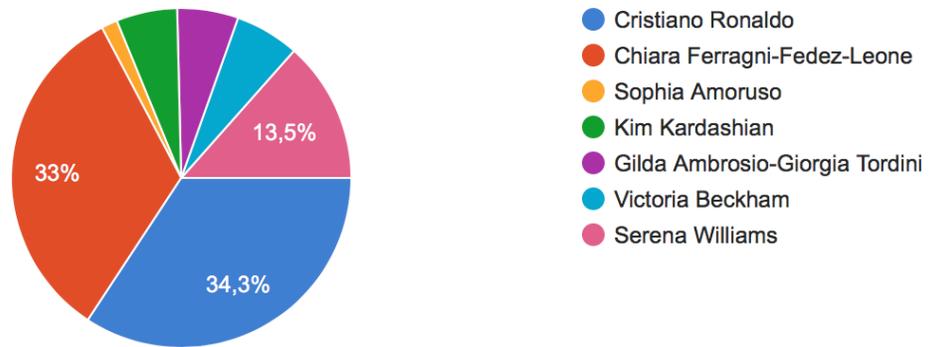
1. Which of these brands do you like the most? (332 answers)

**Figure 83. *Brand Preference - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)***



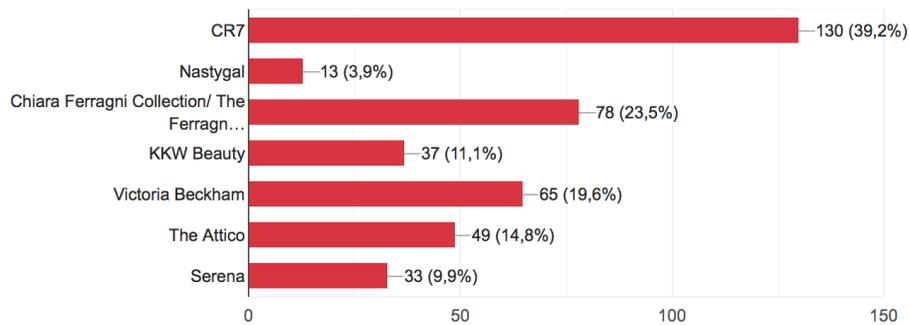
2. Who is the founder of the brands included whose personal history interests you the most? (332 answers)

**Figure 84. Founder Preference - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**



3. Which of these brands would you recommend to your friends and acquaintances? (332 answers)

**Figure 85. Brand Preference in Recommendations - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**



### 5.2.2.ix Analysis Section III: Purchasing Factors

37.7% of respondents had a positive perception and identification with Cristiano Ronaldo and, therefore, with his brand. This shows that males tend to more closely identify with the footballer. Whereas, 20.8% of respondents identified with the Ferragni brand, with more female respondents stating feelings of identification with Ferragni’s celebrity image.

In total, 34.3% of those surveyed identified with the personal history of Cristiano Ronaldo; 33% with the history of Chiara Ferragni and her family; and, 13.5% with the story of Serena Williams.

**Figure 86. Brand Identification Through Storytelling - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**

2-Way Summary Table: Observed Frequencies (d41sezt1)			
Marked cells have counts > 10			
	@13*Immaacquistabunprodottodi questibrandperopera	@13*Immaacquistabunprodottodi questibrandperopera	Row Totals
	SI	No	
@14SeSIPerché	2	0	2
Immagine - collegata al personaggio, Immagine accattivante, Mi piace essere visto con il prodotto	100,00%	0,00%	2
Row %	100,00%	0,00%	2
Immagine - collegata al personaggio, Immagine accattivante	13	2	15
Row %	86,67%	13,33%	15
Immagine accattivante	2	0	2
Row %	100,00%	0,00%	2
Adeguate value-for-money	7	0	7
Row %	100,00%	0,00%	7
Reputazione del marchio	7	0	7
Row %	100,00%	0,00%	7
Elevata qualità	8	0	8
Row %	87,50%	12,50%	8
Adeguate value-for-money, Elevata qualità	0	1	1
Row %	0,00%	100,00%	1
Non mi piace essere visto con il prodotto	3	0	3
Row %	100,00%	0,00%	3
Immagine - collegata al personaggio	20	0	20
Row %	100,00%	0,00%	20
Prezzo	2	0	2
Row %	100,00%	0,00%	2
Immagine - collegata al personaggio, Reputazione del marchio	2	0	2
Row %	100,00%	0,00%	2
Reputazione del marchio, Elevata qualità	1	0	1
Row %	100,00%	0,00%	1
Reputazione del marchio, Immagine accattivante	1	0	1
Row %	100,00%	0,00%	1
Immagine - collegata al personaggio, Reputazione del marchio, Mi piace essere visto con il prodotto	2	0	2
Row %	100,00%	0,00%	2
Immagine accattivante, Mi piace essere visto con il prodotto	1	0	1
Row %	100,00%	0,00%	1
Totale	65	4	69

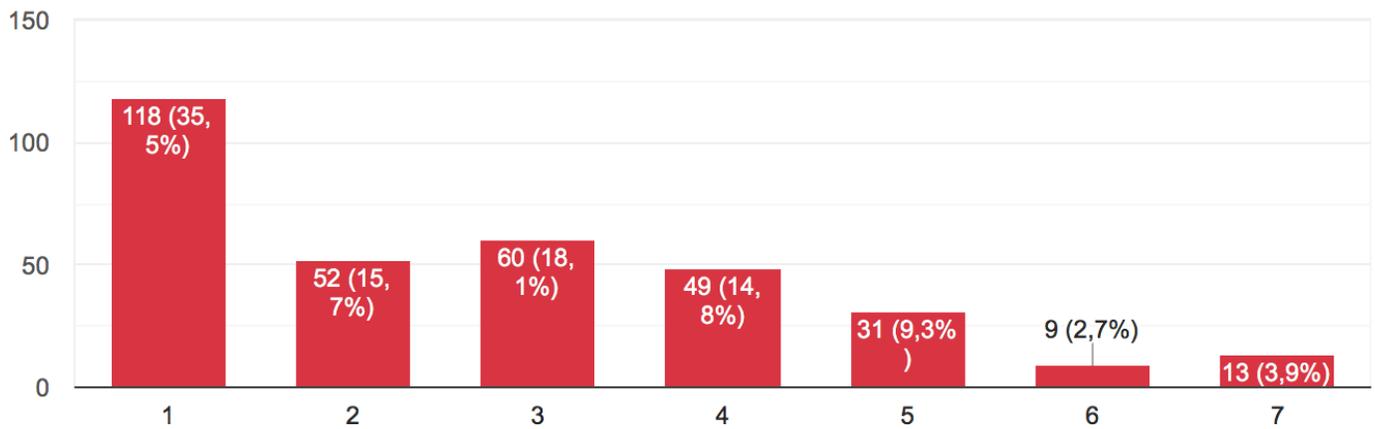
There is a statistically significant association between the personal storytelling of celebrities and the purchase of products linked to in celebrity content on Instagram. The Chi-square analysis ( $df = 6$ ) = 15.3 with a p value = 0.018 shows that the purchaser of the product is involved with the celebrity or influencer representative of the product purchased.

In addition, the highest percentage of the respondents would recommend CR7 (39.2%) to friends and family members. The percentages of those who would make the same recommendation for other brands range from 15-20%.

### 5.2.2.x Section IV: Practical Applications on Case Studies Analysed

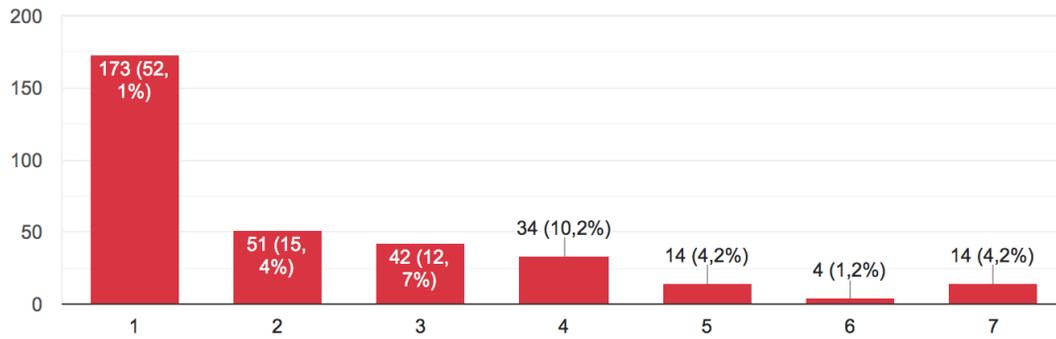
1. If the Chiara Ferragni Collection/ The Ferragnez brand had a different endorser, how much interest would you have towards it? (332 answers)

**Figure 87. Effects on Chiara Ferragni Brand - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**



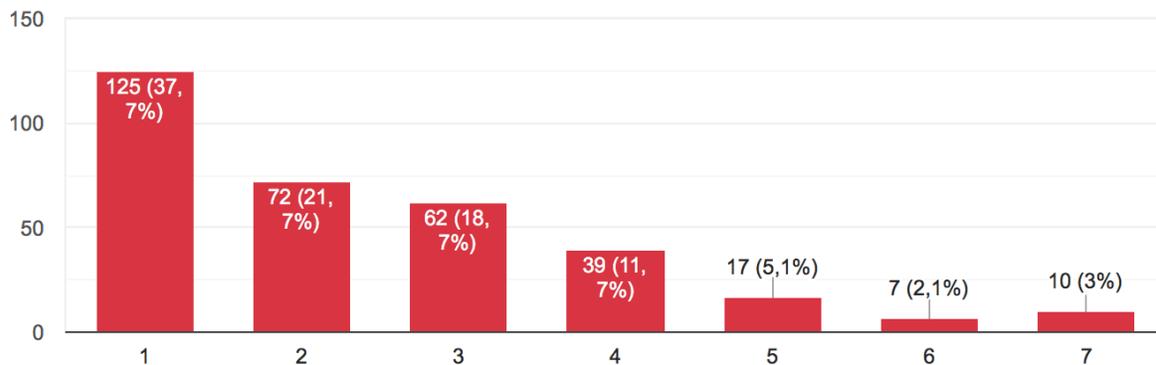
2. If the CR7 brand had a different endorser, how much interest would you have towards it? (332 answers)

**Figure 88. Effects on CR7 Brand - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**



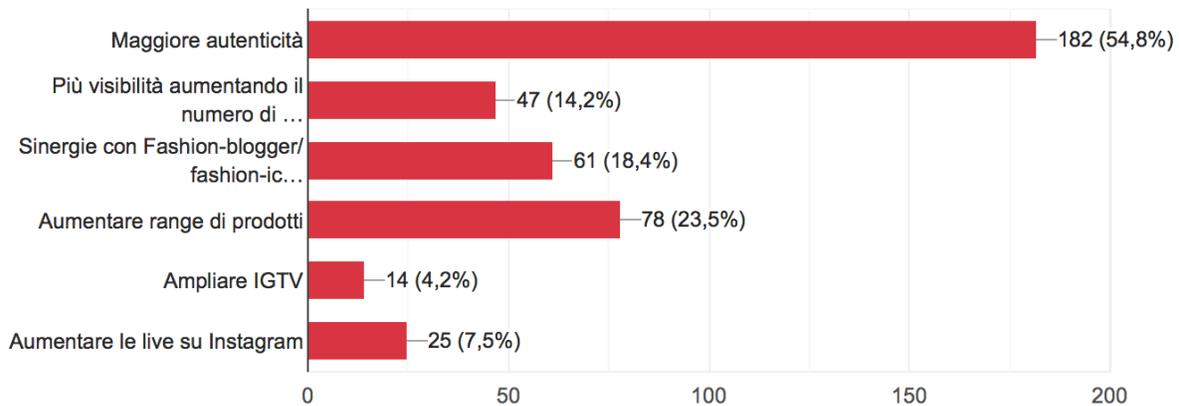
3. If behind the indicated brands there was not the celebrity endorser, but an ordinary person, how much interest in your opinion could they arouse? (332 answers)

**Figure 89. Effects of a Non-Celebrity Endorser - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**



4. If you worked in the marketing sector of one of the brands indicated, what action would you recommend to make brand storytelling more effective through Instagram? (332 answers)

**Figure 90. Suggestions for More Effective Brand Storytelling - Personal Elaboration of Author on SPSS (2019)**



#### 5.2.2.xi Analysis Section IV: Practical Applications for the Case Studies Analysed

The responses to the questions listed above indicate the way in which changes made to brand endorsement affects consumers interest in brands. As is illustrated in the figures above, any change in endorsement would lead to a drastic decrease in the respondent's interest in purchasing the brand and its products. In fact, about 70% of respondents have a score less than or equal to 3 in the case of Chiara Ferragni. The phenomenon is confirmed and intensified in the case of CR7 where 52.1% would no longer be interested in the brand if Ronaldo did not endorse the product.

If behind the brands listed there were not the celebrity endorser, but an ordinary person, interest in the brand drops dramatically, resulting in roughly 80% having a score of less than or equal to 4. These consumer attitudes are consistent with choices that cannot be influenced by storytelling.

Finally, 54.8% of respondents would advise brands to take into consideration the perceived authenticity of promotional activities engaged in through storytelling on Instagram.

### 5.2.2xii Two-Way Multivariate Analysis of Variance MANOVA

The quantitative dependent variables are "how much the celebrity influenced the purchase" and "if there was no celebrity behind the brand, what would have affected the purchase of the brand" evaluated on the 7-point Likert scale. The factors that resulted significant findings are: Use of Instagram, purchase of the product and gender. The method is Main Effect Manova: below are the graphs of the averages and the Wilks test. Figure 88 shows that there is a significant relationship between being an Instagram user and the two adaptable employees;  $F(2, 327) = 8.0135$  is significant:  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ . The average score of users with regard to the influence on the propensity to purchase is significantly higher than for non-users. This is described in Figure 88 (the vertical bars represent the confidence intervals for the averages).

On the x-axis there are the modalities of the factor while on the ordinates we find the means of the dependent variable.

**Figure 91. Instagram Users - Personal Elaboration of Author (2019)**

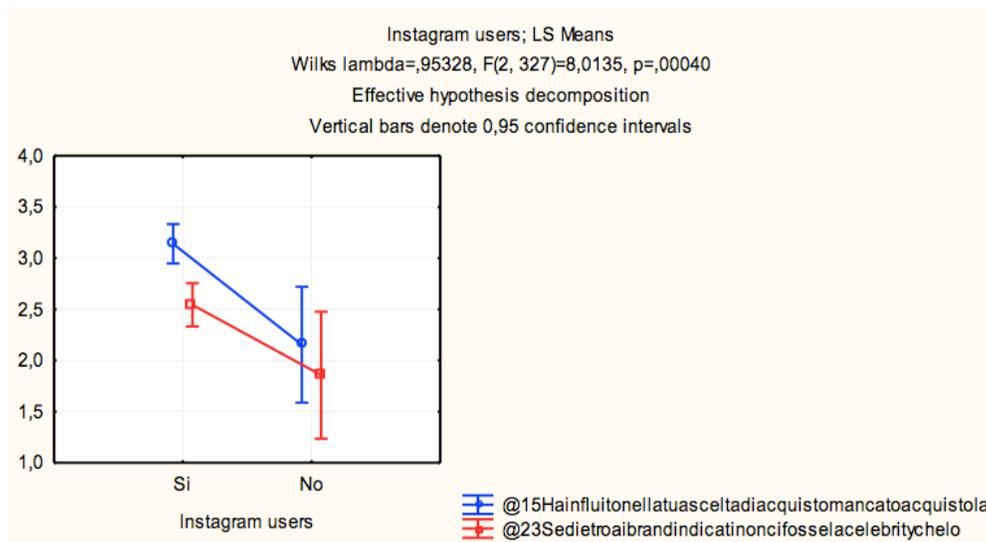
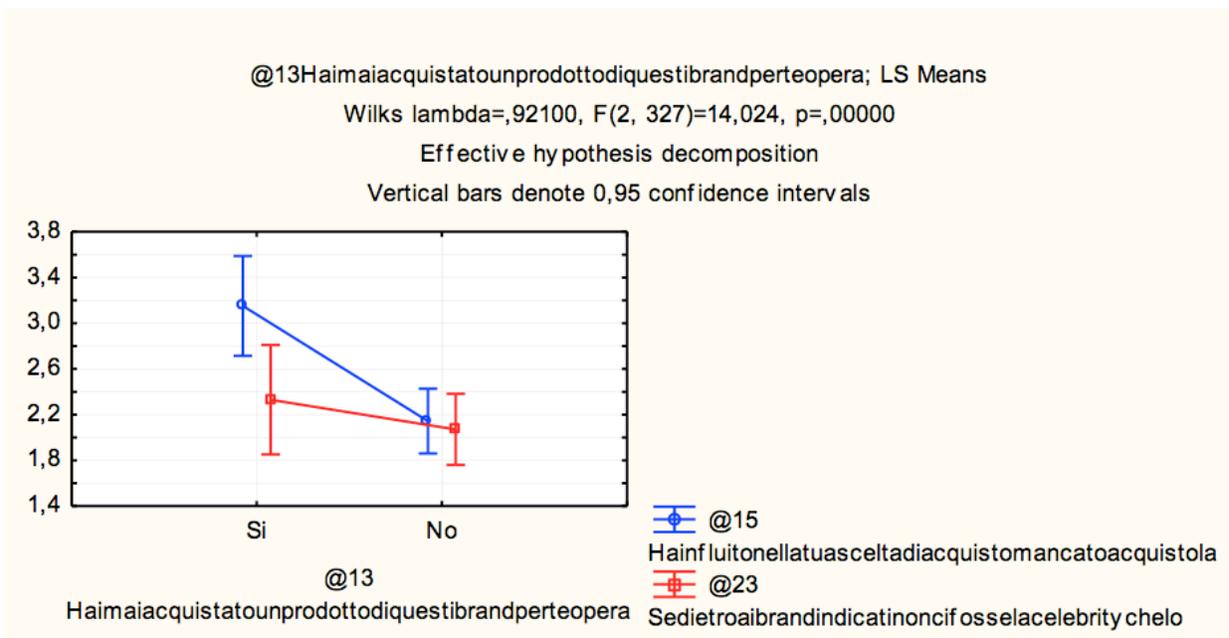


Figure 89 shows that there is a significant relationship between the product purchased and the two dependent variables represented by the average score that the interviewees assigned with regard to the influence of a celebrity or influencer on the propensity to purchase and an evaluation of the same in the absence of the character :  $F(2,327) = 14.024$  is significant:  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ . The average score of purchasers of branded products regarding the influence on the propensity to purchase is significantly higher than for purchasers of non-branded products. This is described in Figure 89 (the vertical bars, as in the previous graph, represent the confidence intervals for the averages).

On the x-axis there are the modalities of the factor while on the ordinates we find the means of the dependent variable.

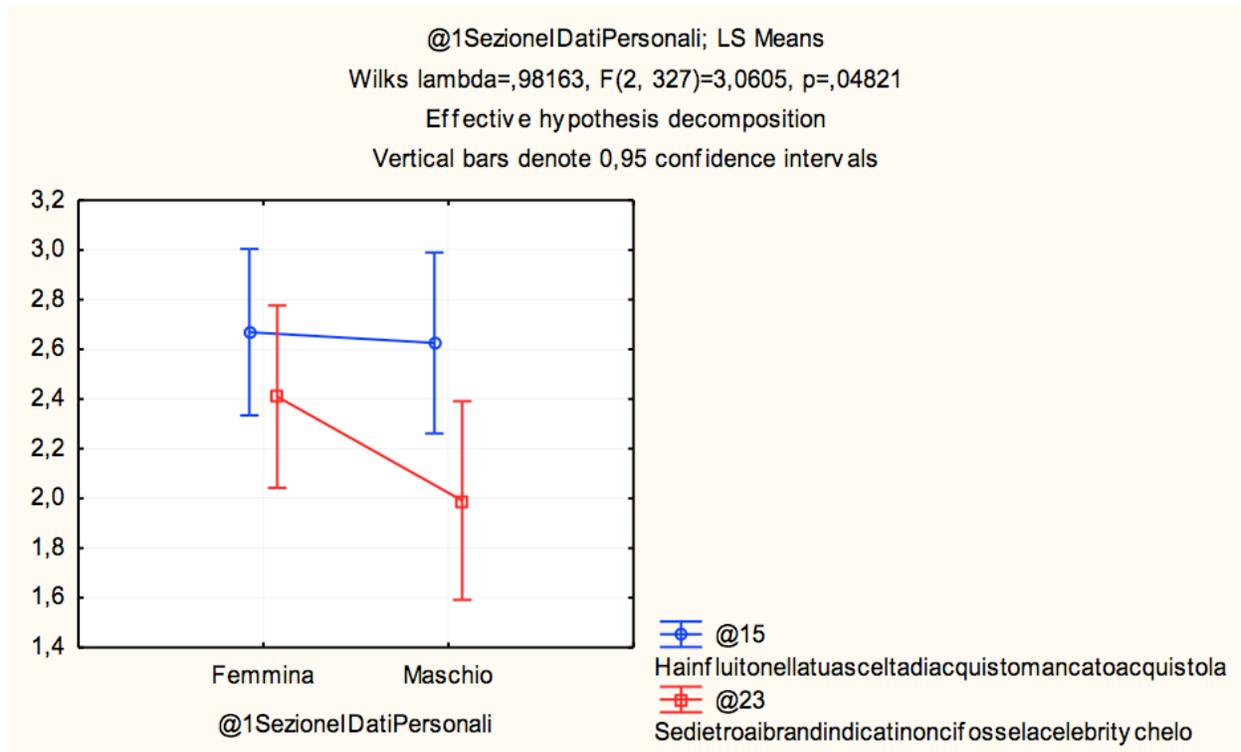
**Figure 92. Celebrity or Influencer Effect on Purchase Intentions - Personal Elaboration of Author (2019)**



In addition, Figure 90 illustrates factors which influence the average score on the influence of storytelling on purchase intent. The value of Fisher's F is at the limits of significance with  $\alpha = 0.05$ .  $F(2,327) = 3.0605$   $p\text{-value} = 0.04821$ . The average score on the influence of storytelling on the purchase intention does not change

between males and females. Instead, it changes in regards to consumers' judgment on the usefulness or attractiveness of the endorser.

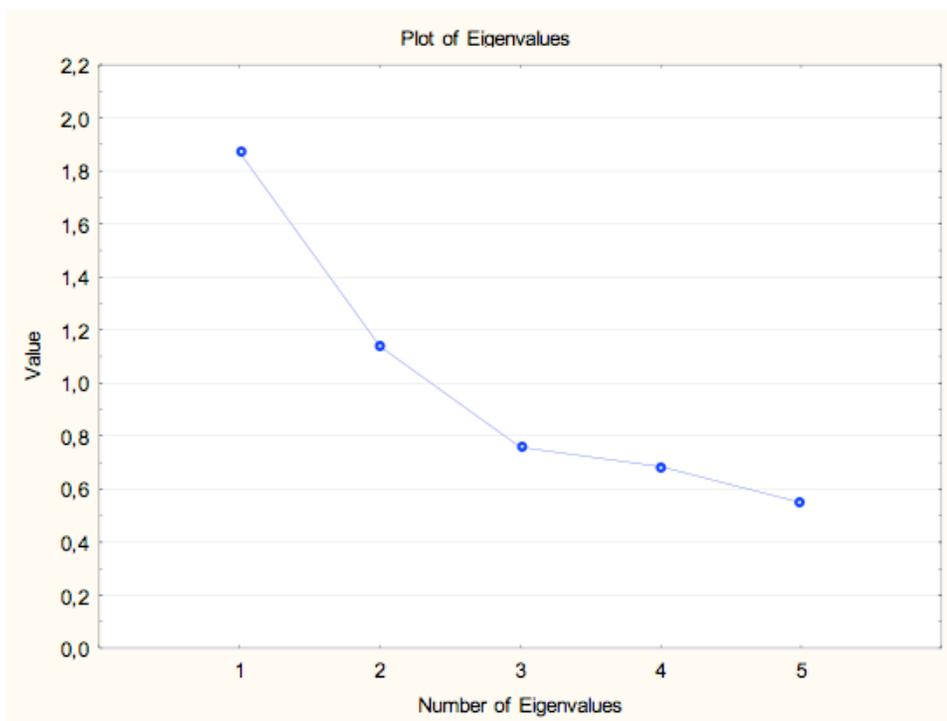
**Figure 93. Celebrity or Influencer Effect on Purchase Intentions (Males and Females) - Personal Elaboration of Author (2019)**



## Factor Analysis

The eigenvalue graph (Scree Plot) shows a correlation between the variables measured on a 7-point Likert scale, sufficient to lead to a PCA. This relationship makes it possible to construct groupings between variables which is useful for the construction of indicators of latent factors. The first two factors explain 34.88% and 25.28% respectively of the overall variability.

**Figure 94. Eigenvalue Analysis - Personal Elaboration of Author (2019)**



The variables evaluated on the Likert scale were analysed with the statistical technique of multivariate analysis (PCA) in order to construct latent factors through which to interpret the phenomena through appropriate indicators. From the factor loadings table we can see that the first factor groups the variables that express the

link between the brand and the character (Factor 1) while the second factor is an indicator of how much the brand-endorser link affects the consumer.

**Figure 95. Variable Factors - Personal Elaboration of Author (2019)**

Variable	Factor Loadings (Varimax raw) (datisez1) Extraction: Principal components (Marked loadings are >,700000)	
	Factor 1	Factor 2
@21SeilbrandChiaraFerragniCollectionTheFerragnezavesse	0,793313	0,087782
@22SeilbrandCR7avesseuntestimonialdiversoquantointeress	0,700905	0,084879
@23Sedietroalbrandindicatoinoncifosselacelebritychelo	0,782810	0,046245
@15Hainfluitonellatuasceltadiacquistomancatoacquistola	0,046670	0,798691
@10EstatodecisivolusodiInstagramperilposizionamentode	0,093940	0,780237
Expl.Var	1,744409	1,263725
Prp.Totl	0,348882	0,252745

### 5.2.2.xiii Synthesis of the Findings

The questionnaire demonstrates just how successful the brands chosen to serve as the basis of the case studies in Chapter Four, th Chiara Ferragni Collection and CR7, actually are. Indeed, the other brands selected for the questionnaire were indicated at minimal percentage levels by respondents.

Perception of brand success, the effectiveness of brand storytelling on Instagram, and purchase intentions were the parameters used for the purposes of this qualitative and quantitative analysis. Of these factors, there is a clear link present between consumers' perceptions of brand success and perceived desirability of a brand. In addition, the majority of respondents are more likely to buy a product when it is

linked to a well-known figure. Moreover, the motivation to purchase, when placed in relation to the actual purchase of a brand's product, highlights the effectiveness of brand storytelling through IG stories and posts on purchase intention.

However, when compared to the questions asked to verify the actual incidence of the storytelling engaged in by a celebrity on purchase intentions, the results were less definitive as many of those surveyed did not view a significant link between the two factors. As to the second parameter, the questions aimed at verifying whether the actual purchase of the product was linked to a celebrity's image, also demonstrated less than definitive results. Here, of those who were asked if they had bought a celebrity endorser product from the brands listed, only half had been induced to purchase because of the celebrity-brand connection.

As regards the questions related to storytelling, it can be seen that among those who refrain from purchasing certain products, the majority of respondents are driven by a desire to avoid showing themselves to be associated with a particular brand. Of these respondents the vast majority are Instagram users, and are, therefore, well-informed about the brand and its communication strategies online. Thus, the creation of an association between a celebrity and a brand through storytelling does not necessarily translate positively into purchase intentions in consumers.

In addition, as illustrated above, as brand storytelling is engaged in by well-known figures, be they influencers or celebrities, who embody brands, there is an enormous involvement on the part of the storyteller and audience. So much so that there is a high percentage of respondents who feel that they identify with Cristiano Ronaldo and the brand he embodies, CR7, on a meaningful level. A statistically significant association emerges between the personal storytelling celebrities engage in on Instagram and the purchase of products connected brand to the brands they represent. Conversely, the analysis of the practical applications to the case studies analysed shows that the absence of a celebrity endorser would result in a drastic reduction in the interest of consumers' in the purchase of offerings from said brand, this is especially present in the analysis of the CR7 brand.

Finally, a key point which has emerged from the qualitative analysis is the keenly expressed need for authenticity in promotion through storytelling, even when performed through Instagram, as the credibility of the brand is a factor that can be decisive in the mediation of purchase intention.

## Conclusion

Nowadays, storytelling, and, more specifically, brand storytelling, has become an essential element of effective marketing. Compared to traditional tools of marketing such as print media and radio, the diffusion and impact of digital tools, through which a combination of visual and interactive elements allows for a greater involvement and immersiveness, such as seen on social media, has had a transformative effect on the practices of marketing.

Whether it be brand storytelling or personal storytelling, in the current (content) consumption context, branding and contemporary consumption have been inextricably influenced by the fiction economy. As ways of forging the reputational and communicative value of a brand, a product, a person, storytelling opens channels of communication that have never before been present between brands and consumers. In such communication the goal is not just to sell a product; rather the aim is to offer a specific plot, a set of contents that can generate emotions and give meaning. The aim, therefore, is not only financial but the constant increase of possibilities. The characters and experiences of brandtelling that are presented can, therefore, be traced back to stories that enchant, that is, those that allow us to build a narrative link that leads the consumer to want to be part of the story, and for this reason, is willing to invest money.

Thanks to the contribution of social media, these stories are spread out across a plethora of platforms, with which it is possible to propose hyper-contents under narrative formats. Content, which is represented by texts, photos, videos, stories, with which branding activities are built and shared, and through which services, products and brands are proposed, is fundamental to any narrative endeavour. What the brand must be able to do is find a connection with the public first of all in relation to life-like or experiential narratives. In particular, if you want to get the most out of narrative branding, you need to take into account consumers' ability to empathise, tapping into that essentially human ability to think against all stringent logic, make use of imagination, fantasy, dreams, and beliefs. Inasmuch, it is posited that Instagram has proved crucial for a number of brands in their attempts to engage in brand storytelling, introduce new products to consumers, and, ultimately, stimulate purchase intentions.

## **Managerial Implications**

The managerial implications that can be derived from the contents of this thesis are related to the following aspects:

For companies and brands that use stories, especially those who use Instagram as a platform, there is a room for improvement. First, there should be greater emphasis on building strong ties, which is an appropriate and positive way to build and foster consumer-brand relationships. The literature has also indicated that storytelling is an effective way of increasing the involvement and attractiveness of the brand towards consumers; however, but quantitative and qualitative analyses undertaken for the purposes of this thesis have shown that it is necessary to link brand promotion tool more effectively with more direct purchase methods, thus reducing the steps between first approach and purchase.

A well-designed brand story must include four elements - authenticity, conciseness, reversal, and humor - however, authenticity is the used and the most important of these elements. This element is associated with truth and reality, which has positive effects on brand attitudes and intentions, as suggested by past research, while the latter elements listed imply notions of clarity and memorability, thereby also contributing to building positive brand attitudes.

When choosing brand storytelling tools, credibility must be maximised in order to obtain a narrative that the consumer can actually feel close to, as opposed to a story which feels artificial or otherwise contrived.

Although there are certainly other alternative tools to traditional forms of marketing, through which brand storytelling can be carried out, the most effective way to tell story that are the basis of brand identity, generate participation, interaction and identification at present is Instagram. This is largely due to the fact that Instagram, and those who make use of it, exhibit a significant of influence on its users, which has a to direct effect on purchase intentions.

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## *Riassunto*

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La tesi ha ad oggetto un'analisi della marca quale risorsa chiave per l'impresa, in particolare si esamina l'importanza della narrazione, nello specifico quale racconto di sé stessi, finalizzato a creare ed accrescere il valore di un *brand*. Al centro dello studio non è posto il *brand* nella sua accezione tradizionale, ma in una veste che ha avuto risalto e sviluppo soprattutto grazie alla diffusione dei *digital media*, ed in particolare, di Instagram. Difatti, verranno presi in considerazione, in particolare, i casi concreti di alcune *celebrity*, che, attraverso il *personal storytelling* hanno puntato, e puntano, gran parte della loro strategia di *marketing* sulla narrazione di sé stessi.

Lo *storytelling* affonda le radici nell'antichità, l'arte di raccontare storie è una delle forme di comunicazione umana più vecchie, quella maggiormente radicata nel tempo. Di conseguenza il lavoro inquadra storicamente la sua nascita e lo sviluppo nel tempo, partendo dalle modalità più basilari di narrazione (storie, fiabe, miti), fino ad arrivare alla realtà attuale.

In primo luogo vengono individuate le origini del racconto in senso ampio, da non confondere con la "storia" intesa quale descrizione oggettiva ed ordinata di fatti ed eventi così come succedutisi nella loro sequenza cronologica. Un racconto è qualcosa di diverso, fatto di percezioni, rappresentazioni, memoria, finzione, immaginazione, personaggi, trame, scene, tutti tenuti insieme dall'interpretazione quale forza – guida. Se è vero che la distinzione tra storia e *storytelling* risulta, come descritta, piuttosto chiara, è altrettanto vero che nella vita quotidiana è difficile scindere le due modalità di organizzare le esperienze, che risultano fuse in una unica, ed è anche rilevato come ciò accadeva già nell'antica Grecia, laddove si verificava una sovrapposizione tra i concetti di *kronos* e *mythos*.

È stata proposta per definire meglio i confini dello *storytelling* una classificazione fondata su quattro elementi principali che lo caratterizzano: il messaggio; il conflitto; i personaggi; la trama. Inoltre, vengono delineate le tre funzioni dello *storytelling*, ovvero la funzione pubblica, la funzione individuale dello *storytelling* ed infine quella relazionale.

Tra le analisi più rilevanti in materia, vengono evidenziate le cosiddette 6S+1 dello *storytelling*, classificazione proposta dal Prof. Fontana per individuare un numero di distinti ruoli che rappresentano le costanti della narrazione: *storyteller*, *story-architect*, *story-listener*, *story*, *set*, *show*. Oltre questi viene, in realtà, descritta anche un'ulteriore figura che è quella dello *story-holder*, che entra in azione quando il pubblico diventa co-creatore di racconti.

La ricostruzione effettuata prende in considerazione i diversi schemi e modelli narrativi elaborati dai più importanti autori che si sono interessati alla tematica: Propp, Campbell, Vogler, Booker. Dall'analisi delle elaborazioni teoriche degli autori indicati, si evince come molti *brand* abbiano attinto, facendone un'applicazione pratica evidente, proprio agli elementi narrativi della storia da essi configurati, per creare delle campagne di marketing, principalmente diffuse tramite i *media* tradizionali, che rappresentano in modo chiaro

tutti i passaggi dei diversi schemi narrativi illustrati, e che vengono descritte nella tesi. Si tratta di *adverts* a volte anche molto noti, venuti alla ribalta proprio in ragione dell'uso peculiare di modelli di *storytelling* tradizionali.

Oltre al quadro generale, è svolto un esame più approfondito della valenza del *brand storytelling*, nell'ambito del *corporate storytelling*, partendo dalla descrizione di come la comunicazione attraverso un racconto sia in grado di influenzare il consumatore, e quindi di attrarlo e legarlo al marchio. Quindi, si analizzano più specificamente le applicazioni dello *storytelling* al Marketing, ripercorrendo anche per questo aspetto le evoluzioni storiche a cui si è assistito. L'uso di meccanismi narrativi non è stato, difatti, sempre parte integrante degli strumenti del settore, ma ha trovato rilevante diffusione soprattutto a partire dagli anni '90, ed a maggior ragione con il *boom* economico e tecnologico che vi ha fatto seguito, e con più slancio grazie ad Internet. Solo più di recente è stato, in particolare, apprezzato il tipo di relazione tra brand e consumatore che deriva dallo *storytelling*, tanto da rendere necessaria la previsioni di appositi ruoli all'interno delle aziende per occuparsene, sconosciuti prima dell'avvento dei *social media*. Proprio la crescita di questi ha portato a rivedere radicalmente la tradizionale concezione dello *storytelling*, generando nuove opportunità, ma anche nuove sfide per i *marketers* e per le loro campagne.

In particolare, l'analisi del *corporate storytelling* mette in risalto come una storia rappresenti sempre il racconto orale o scritto di episodi ed esperienze, passati o presenti, che coinvolgono uno o più soggetti, tanto che essa si può definire come una serie di eventi posti in un ordine specifico con un inizio, uno svolgimento ed una fine. Fare *storytelling*, nell'ambito della gestione del *brand*, non significa semplicemente raccontare storie, anche perché non esiste una locuzione italiana che traduca al meglio questo concetto. Si è ipotizzato di tradurre il termine con “parlare o dire attraverso un racconto”, ma l'esperienza dimostra come il significato non possa semplicemente considerarsi quello di raccontare storie, ma, in modo più appropriato, costruire racconti.

Quindi, si arriva all'aspetto più rilevante del racconto di marca, che risiede nel *corporate storytelling*, che implica dimensioni multiple (individualistica, socio-organizzativa, legale/regolatoria). Le diverse declinazioni dello *storytelling* d'impresa mostrano come in tale ambito la narrazione risponde a finalità molteplici ed assume un'importanza via via crescente. Attraverso le storie i *marketers* riescono, dunque, ad incrementare l'*engagement* con il pubblico, facendolo sentire più autenticamente coinvolto, e con la finalità ultima di creare una connessione emotiva personale, e da questo punto di vista il *corporate storytelling* presenta gli stessi tratti di quello individuale.

Un particolare modello descrittivo dei cinque elementi (Glue, Reward, Emotion, Authentic, Target) su cui si basa il successo o meno di una campagna di marketing, è rappresentato dallo schema individuato da Nguyen, che ha elaborato il modello G.R.E.A.T., ritenuto di grande utilità per i *marketers* per l'elaborazione di storie con le quali i consumatori sono in grado di identificarsi e sentirsi partecipi.

L'analisi tende dunque a dimostrare come lo strumento della storia rappresenti una fondamentale modalità di

valorizzazione del brand, che affonda le radici in periodi storici ormai lontani, ma che, grazie soprattutto ai nuovi strumenti digitali ed all'evoluzione tecnologica, ha potuto e continuerà ad avere un ampliamento ed uno sviluppo di tutte le potenzialità.

Dopo aver illustrato i caratteri generali dello *storytelling*, viene analizzato proprio l'impatto e l'evoluzione della narrazione mediante strumenti digitali. Lo sviluppo dello *storytelling* applicato al marketing è un risultato direttamente legato alla crescita ed alla diffusione, non solo dei media tradizionali come televisione, radio e stampa, ma soprattutto dei media digitali, ed in particolare di Internet, e a maggior ragione dei *social networks*. Inevitabilmente il modo di raccontare storie, che per migliaia di anni ha caratterizzato l'esperienza umana, ne è stato modificato, soprattutto in ragione della facilità con cui *Internet* permette oggi, praticamente a chiunque, di raggiungere, anche con dispositivi non particolarmente evoluti, una platea mondiale.

Sono le caratteristiche del *transmedia storytelling* a rivelarsi decisive. Esso consente, mediante l'uso di una pluralità di diverse piattaforme digitali, di implementare e sviluppare la narrazione attraverso modalità che non hanno eguali nel passato. Il processo ha avuto un'impennata grazie all'introduzione dei dispositivi mobili, contribuendo, nel *marketing*, allo sviluppo di nuove strategie di comunicazione e creando un ambiente in cui lo *storytelling* permette di diffondere con sempre maggiore frequenza le storie. Non solo, le nuove piattaforme consentono anche che queste ultime, una volta comunicate, restino fruibili ed a disposizione del pubblico *online*.

I cambiamenti tecnologici hanno dato il là ad una cruciale modifica nel ruolo assunto dal consumatore nella gestione dei media: questo non è più, soltanto, uno spettatore passivo, ma diventa un partecipante attivo in un processo in cui gli è consentita accessibilità costante alla storia, ed in un contesto in cui la nuova generazione ha l'aspettativa di poter accedere alle informazioni con facilità e velocità impensabili in passato. Sotto tale profilo, impatto fondamentale è giocato da media quali *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Snapchat*, *Twitter*, che hanno radicalmente alterato la percezione di come le storie vengono narrate ed il ruolo dell'*audience* nella narrazione.

L'efficacia di un progetto transmediale nell'accrescimento di *engagement* verso il pubblico dipende da una pluralità di fattori, e generalmente si ritiene che la stessa storia debba essere diffusa su almeno tre diverse piattaforme, in modo tale che ciascuna contribuisca in qualche modo all'intero racconto. Il fattore chiave è dato dalla possibilità per lo spettatore di diventare partecipante attivo nella storia, attraverso l'uso di una pluralità di canali, nell'ambito dei quali ciascun media possa dare il suo contributo in modo peculiare allo sviluppo della storia (Jenkins, 2013).

Lo *storytelling* è sempre stato una costante dell'esperienza umana, e l'emergere delle nuove tecnologie, ed in particolare di *Internet* e dei *social media* ha fatto sì che il *digital storytelling* sia giunto ad avere un ruolo cruciale nel marketing, laddove lo scopo ultimo è quello di innescare il coinvolgimento e la *purchase intention* dei clienti. Ciò nonostante, la letteratura non evidenzia unicamente i vantaggi nell'applicazione del *digital storytelling* al marketing (*connection*, *identity*, *brand identification*, *brand image*, *application*), ma anche alcuni svantaggi, che possono minarne l'efficacia. Difatti, tra gli errori più comuni, sono segnalati l'uso di messaggi

contraddittori o confusi, di menzogne, l'uso di toni inappropriati, il provocare reazioni forzate.

Gli strumenti digitali permettono che lo *storytelling* possa diventare sempre più coinvolgente per il pubblico, in quanto l'impatto della comunicazione visiva è un fattore di accrescimento che contribuisce a far immergere in modo più profondo lo spettatore nel racconto. Difatti, l'uso delle immagini e di altri elementi visivi rende chiaramente più efficace la narrazione, ma bisogna sempre considerare che l'autore della storia deve, in tal caso, accertarsi che le immagini vengano percepite dai destinatari secondo una corretta decodifica, e per raggiungere tale obiettivo è necessario che da esse siano ricavabili idee facilmente comprensibili.

Lo strumento visivo e le immagini semplificano la comunicazione, così consentendo strategie di marketing incentrate sui social media, e tra questi, si è scelto di concentrarsi su quello che nell'ultimo decennio ha registrato l'*exploit* maggiore in termini di diffusione ed utilizzo: si tratta di Instagram, lanciato nel 2010, che proprio sulla sua natura principalmente visuale ha costruito il proprio successo. Come si dimostrerà, le funzionalità che tale applicazione consente ai propri *users* ed utenti rappresentano uno dei fattori che lo rendono tanto indicato come strumento di narrazione, anche per un *brand*, ma soprattutto, per una persona. Instagram ha impiegato relativamente poco a scavalcare *social media* già in passato attivi e diffusi quali *Facebook*, *Youtube*, *Twitter* ecc., nell'ambito delle strategie di Marketing delle aziende più lungimiranti, che proprio grazie a questa scelta hanno avuto un impatto incredibilmente positivo sulle vendite. Il suo successo, in particolare, è stato attribuito alla semplicità dell'approccio comunicativo che consente non solo la diffusione di enormi quantità di informazioni con modalità visive, ma anche la loro ordinata organizzazione e catalogazione mediante gli *hashtags*. Proprio la natura prettamente visuale del media, che si è sviluppato con tassi di crescita straordinariamente elevati in pochissimi anni, aumentando le funzionalità a disposizione degli utenti, sempre in un'ottica di consentirgli un ruolo progressivamente più attivo, ha rappresentato la sua arma vincente. Oltretutto, si tratta di un'applicazione gratuita, che mediante la semplice condivisione di un'immagine, senza la necessità di tante parole o descrizioni (che pure è possibile inserire), consente all'utente di raggiungere un pubblico planetario. Inoltre, e si tratta di un aspetto da non sottovalutare, Instagram consente all'utente di verificare, attraverso lo strumento degli *Insights*, l'efficacia in termini di penetrazione ed interazione della comunicazione svolta con il suo utilizzo, e, quindi, in definitiva, l'*engagement* generato nel consumatore, e, di conseguenza, il successo o il fallimento della comunicazione da parte del *brand*.

È facile comprendere come tale strumento sia divenuto rapidamente un mezzo privilegiato di interazione del *brand* con il proprio pubblico. Per tali motivi, si è ritenuto che Instagram abbia inciso profondamente anche sulle strategie di marketing delle aziende, che già si avvalevano di *Facebook*, *Twitter* e *Youtube* come strumenti di comunicazione del marchio, soprattutto e grazie all'introduzione di funzionalità quali le IG *stories*, che permettono di dare risalto, con brevi filmati (che restano visibili per 24 ore sul profilo interessato), ad episodi e accadimenti della vita quotidiana. In tale ottica, grande rilevanza hanno assunto le collaborazioni, soprattutto quelle con i c.d. *brand ambassador* ed *influencers*, soggetti che, in ragione del loro particolare status, possono

avere con i loro commenti e le loro attività un impatto diretto sul comportamento dei consumatori. Ecco perché, i *brand* hanno compreso che sempre più cruciale diventa l'individuazione di quegli *influencers* che possono nel modo migliore raggiungere una predeterminata *target audience*. Le modalità di collaborazione per realizzare tali risultati sono molteplici, e ciascuna presenta vantaggi e svantaggi, ma sicuramente tutte, nel contesto attuale, sono molto più efficaci rispetto ai contenuti tradizionali con la finalità di aumentare la visibilità del brand e la *brand engagement*, e per modellare le relazioni tra *brand* e consumatori.

Nell'ottica del lavoro svolto, assume fondamentale rilievo il personal *storytelling*, inteso come narrazione della vita di un individuo, ipotesi speciale ed emblematica di come la narrazione incide sulla rappresentazione e sulla visione della persona, quindi sulla percezione che della persona si ha all'esterno. La narrazione autobiografica ha avuto sempre un grande potere, a maggior ragione nella realtà attuale in cui le nuove tecnologie di comunicazione, tra cui anche e soprattutto Instagram consentono di ampliare in modo inimmaginabile in passato la cerchia di soggetti a cui la storia viene comunicata, e tramite di essa, i valori e l'identità del soggetto. Si ha riprova dell'importanza di una narrazione quotidiana proprio nei casi di *brand* che sono oggetto di analisi, in quanto si dimostra come il racconto della vita reale, della persona che identifica il brand, rappresenti un fattore cruciale per le strategie di marketing. Sono stati i *social media* ad amplificare gli strumenti attraverso i quali attuare strategie di comunicazione, basandosi su quattro fondamentali elementi: il motivo, il contenuto, la rete, il ruolo sociale e le interazioni. Tali elementi, combinati tra di loro contribuiscono a creare il microcosmo di interazioni e comunicazione che forma le basi dello *storytelling* tramite *social media*.

Non è possibile sottovalutare i processi di umanizzazione del brand (*Human Branding*), che hanno avuto rilevante impatto sul *marketing*, ed in particolare su quello praticato *online*, attraverso i *social networks*. Questo processo in cui l'individuo diventa brand è strettamente connesso con il *personal branding*, e trova il suo culmine nell'uso dei social media, che permettono la creazione di un *brand status*, raggiungibile unicamente tramite il consumo e l'esposizione tramite i *mass media* di identità e personalità, come se fossero beni. Quando gli individui diventano brand, si è assistito ad un fenomeno definito come *brand love*, per cui si intende un atteggiamento particolarmente positivo nei confronti di un brand che incarna le emozioni, il comportamento e le percezioni dei consumatori.

Terreno fertile per lo sviluppo dello Human Branding è il modo in cui le *celebrities* se ne avvalgono. La relazione tra esseri umani e *brand* si basa sull'esistenza di una qualche forma di interazione tra le personalità delle due entità, in quanto esiste effettivamente una relazione tra individui e marchi. Questa connessione, si basa sul concetto per cui che i tratti della personalità associati a un marchio possono influenzare l'atteggiamento dei consumatori. La *brand personality* consiste proprio in un insieme di caratteristiche umane e tratti della personalità associati ad un determinato *brand*, e rappresenta una pietra miliare nello sviluppo del legame emotivo che si crea tra questo ed i consumatori. Si è ritenuto che essa sia misurabile in termini di tre dimensioni distinte, che portano ad atteggiamenti favorevoli e generano *purchase intention*. Queste dimensioni sono la

preferenza, intesa come percezione positiva dei tratti e della personalità di un marchio, in relazione ai benefici conferiti al consumatore. Il concetto di preferenza è applicabile anche ai marchi umani, poiché la misura in cui i consumatori conservano impressioni favorevoli sulla personalità o sui tratti caratteriali di una celebrità ha un impatto diretto per la creazione di una relazione positiva tra marchi e consumatori. Poi c'è l'originalità, quale percezione di novità della personalità di un determinato marchio, o comunque distinzione, differenza di un marchio dai suoi concorrenti nel settore. Ed infine la chiarezza, riferita agli aspetti "apparenti e riconoscibili" della personalità del marchio agli occhi dei consumatori.

L'aspetto che rende interessante l'analisi del "brand umano", soprattutto, nella forma dei cd. *influencers* e delle *celebrities* di Instagram, consiste nell'esame dei tratti distintivi caratterizzanti tali situazioni, rispetto allo status ed al comportamento degli utenti medi di Instagram. Per tali motivi si è resa necessaria un'analisi specifica, sia demografica che per aree geografiche, per genere, per età, per estrazione sociale, volta a fare luce sulle caratteristiche degli utenti "medi" di Instagram. Vengono posti a confronto coloro che, attraverso tale strumento si limitano ad un'interazione con il resto degli utenti, e quindi, anche con i brand, rispetto a soggetti che, invece, hanno fatto di Instagram uno strumento chiave della loro attività professionale: i cd. *influencers*, soggetti che hanno acquisito l'abilità e il potere di indirizzare gli acquirenti potenziali di un prodotto o di un servizio, promuovendo o raccomandando gli articoli attraverso i social media, ed, in alcuni casi, diventando loro stessi i creatori di *personal brand*, la cui creazione, sviluppo, e valore sono completamente frutto di strategie di marketing attuate attraverso *social media*. Ulteriori differenze messe in risalto sono quelle esistenti rispetto alle *celebrities*, in quanto associate a notorietà e straordinarietà di cui le altre figure indicate sono prive, e su cui proprio queste personalità possono puntare per raccontare storie che vanno oltre l'ordinario, storie che riescono a colpire l'immaginario del pubblico, e soddisfarne l'aspirazione a poter ricondurre il marchio ad un volto.

Il concetto di *celebrity* non è più assimilabile a quello delle celebrità "tradizionali", principalmente modelli a cui ispirarsi e con cui porsi a confronto: oggi prevale una concezione di *celebrity* rivoluzionata dall'uso dei *social network*, tanto è vero che la fascia di consumatori che maggiormente risente della comunicazione tramite gli strumenti descritti, corrisponde alla fascia di età più ampia nell'uso di essi, ed in particolare di Instagram, i c.d. *millennials*. Inizialmente, il ruolo delle *celebrity* è principalmente ed esclusivamente quello di *endorser* di prodotti, attività ancora oggi più diffusa basata sull'influenza delle loro personalità, in quanto tramite la "raccomandazione" di alcuni beni piuttosto che di altri, è possibile orientare le preferenze di acquisto dei consumatori. Dunque attualmente *celebrities* ed *influencers* rappresentano utenti d'eccezione, mossi alla loro partecipazione nei *social media* ed a Instagram in particolare, da motivazioni che sono diverse ed estranee a quelle della generalità del pubblico. Le *celebrities*, soprattutto, hanno mostrato il loro valore come Human Brands, nel senso di essere identificate nei marchi sponsorizzati, fino a giungere ad un processo di sviluppo del proprio *personal brand*. Diverso è il caso degli *influencers*, sebbene spesso questo ruolo rappresenti il trampolino di lancio verso lo status di *celebrity*. Queste persone, spesso, hanno visto rivoluzionata la loro esistenza semplicemente grazie all'uso di Instagram ed in alcuni casi dall'anonimato hanno acquisito in poco

tempo una straordinaria notorietà, che, di conseguenza, gli ha permesso di generare *appeal* nei *brand*, per il modo in cui questa notorietà può riflettersi positivamente sulla promozione del proprio prodotto. Limitandosi a mostrarsi nella loro realtà quotidiana, raccontando storie di vita vissuta, mentre usano e vengono ritratte con determinati prodotti, queste figure ottengono quale risultato quello di attrarre verso il *brand* il proprio pubblico, connettendosi con i consumatori in modo diretto, organico ed autentico.

Mentre gli *influencers* rappresentano quasi degli “intermediari” tra *brand* e consumatori, quale applicazione ed esempio pratico delle affermazioni teoriche sviluppate nella tesi, al centro dell’analisi sono posti due *brand* che in modo più significativo rappresentano come la narrazione di marca tramite Instagram, ed in particolare la narrazione della vita privata e quotidiana di chi li ha creati e li incarna, Chiara Ferragni (per Chiara Ferragni Collection), e Cristiano Ronaldo (per CR7), siano stati fondamentali per far raggiungere risultati eccezionali a livello di vendite e di notorietà dei loro prodotti. Questi dimostrano come gli strumenti di *marketing* digitale riflettano il bisogno dei consumatori di avere un contatto più diretto ed autentico con i brand, superando le forme tradizionali di *advertising*, oramai divenute inadeguate, soprattutto per alcune tipologie di prodotti, se utilizzate in modo esclusivo. I brand indicati hanno in comune molti aspetti, prima di tutto il fatto di essere Human Brands, e di puntare sullo *storytelling* come forma di Personal Branding, vale a dire su forme di narrazione di sé stessi, per rappresentare anche il racconto di marca.

Chiara Ferragni è nota per la sua ascesa da semplice *fashion blogger*, prima ad *influencer* di fama mondiale, ed infine a musa per milioni di *followers*, che l’ha portata, nell’arco di meno di un decennio, ad essere addirittura inserita dalla rivista Forbes nella sua lista “30 under 30” delle figure più influenti nel mondo del business nell’anno 2015, nonché ad essere oggetto di un *Case Study* alla Harvard Business School. Quanto la narrazione personale che viene effettuata quotidianamente sia imprescindibile per il successo e le vendite del *brand* Chiara Ferragni Collection, e quanto questa strategia influenzi la *purchase intention* dei consumatori, è un dato inconfutabile. Il personaggio in questione, anche grazie all’utilizzo di Instagram, ha captato le tendenze più evolute delle strategie di *marketing*, ed ha tramutato questa intuizione in vendite, ed in notorietà del proprio brand. Non è un caso che Chiara Ferragni abbia compreso come, oltre ad accostarsi ai marchi dei prodotti patrocinati nella veste di *influencer*, ciò che impatta maggiormente sul pubblico è la costruzione di storie di vita quotidiana reale, di credibilità intorno alla propria persona, in modo tale che l’abbinamento con il marchio non strida con chi lo rappresenta.

Oltre al caso di Chiara Ferragni, è stato preso in esame il *brand* CR7, che si identifica con il creatore Cristiano Ronaldo, la cui notorietà non è circoscritta al mondo del calcio e dello sport, essendo riuscito a distinguersi non solo come atleta e testimonial di vari brand, ma soprattutto come Human Brand per CR7. Il grande successo che ha caratterizzato tutte le iniziative che ruotano attorno al calciatore, va oltre il semplice *endorsement* di altri famosi top brands, ed ha portato il suo personal brand a diventare la principale fonte di successo finanziario. L’impatto che ha avuto Cristiano Ronaldo sui *social network* rappresenta proprio l’ingrediente principale che gli

ha consentito di sviluppare un personal brand, che attraverso lo *storytelling* ha costruito la propria rilevanza.

Gli esempi oggetto di approfondimento rappresentano la dimostrazione pratica di come la narrazione di sé stessi, attuata attraverso strumenti digitali, ed in particolare avvalendosi di Instagram per il racconto di vita quotidiana, quando la persona si identifica con il creatore del brand, diventa *brand storytelling* a tutti gli effetti.

Oltre alla trattazione teorica, una parte fondamentale del lavoro è quella che riporta gli esiti delle analisi svolte, oltre alla illustrazione dei contenuti della ricerca qualitativa. Sono state sottoposte delle interviste semi-strutturate a tre diverse categorie professionali, tutte, a titolo diverso, idonee a fornire un loro punto di vista sui temi di ricerca, basandosi sulle attività svolte e sull'esperienza acquisita. Si tratta sia di *influencers*, che di esperti del settore, nonché di un Partner McKinsey, che, in ragione della loro competenza specifica, sono stati in grado di offrire un quadro pratico.

Attraverso lo strumento delle interviste qualitative, svolte sottoponendo domande formulate *ad hoc* in relazione al campo di attività di ciascun soggetto interpellato, è stato possibile ottenere interessanti evidenze dell'efficacia dell'uso della narrazione del *brand* tramite Instagram e tramite IG stories sulla *purchase intention*, verificando se si tratta di un aspetto che, in casi diversi da quelli di studio presentati nella tesi, potrebbe risultare altrettanto decisivo.

I punti chiave che sono emersi dalle interviste qualitative, e dalla ricerca quantitativa descrittiva volta alla identificazione dei driver della *purchase intention* nel *brand storytelling*, attuata mediante la somministrazione di un questionario a cui ha partecipato un campione di 362 persone, sono molto interessanti. La finalità della ricerca è stata quella di verificare se alcune delle asserzioni della letteratura analizzate nella tesi, da un punto di vista teorico, trovino anche un riscontro concreto dal punto di vista pratico – applicativo.

Dai risultati non sono emerse soltanto conferme. Difatti, se è vero che l'uso del *brand storytelling* mediante Instagram è fondamentale per il posizionamento del brand, soprattutto nel mercato dei c.d. *Millennials*, è venuto fuori che non altrettanto è possibile affermare in modo generalizzato per il lancio di un nuovo *brand*, in quanto è possibile che, a seconda del settore merceologico di cui fa parte, potrebbero essere più efficaci i media tradizionali (televisione e stampa). Neppure, dalle interviste, si è ritenuto che l'uso delle IG stories sia necessariamente più incisivo ai fini della *purchase intention* rispetto alla pubblicazione dei posts, soprattutto in ragione del fatto che mentre le prime hanno una durata temporanea, questi ultimi restano visibili a tempo indeterminato.

L'altro aspetto di grande rilievo emerso è che la massimizzazione della *purchase intention* è legata maggiormente all'uso di modalità che consentano di abbreviare il percorso di acquisto, e di velocizzare la possibilità del consumatore di finalizzare il coinvolgimento e l'attrattività che invece sono generati dalla narrazione di marca.

Sicuramente uno dei fattori più incisivi emersi dall'analisi quantitativa è che quando la narrazione di marca viene associata con l'uso di figure note nell'ambiente, e di *celebrities* come *influencers*, si genera un grande

coinvolgimento con il pubblico, e questo si evince dall'alta percentuale di rispondenti che, per esempio, nell'acquisto del brand CR7 si identifica con il suo creatore, e gran parte di tale *engagement* deriva dall'uso di Instagram.

Il questionario, oltre ai brand analizzati come casi principali della tesi, ha riguardato anche altri marchi del settore fashion, caratterizzati dall'essere il creatore del *brand* anche il personaggio che identifica il brand stesso, una celebrità di fama. Sono tutti esempi, non meno rilevanti e significativi, in cui la narrazione di sé stesso svolta dal personaggio realizza anche il racconto di marca (KKW beauty, Victoria Beckham, The Attico, S by Serena, Nastygal). Non si tratta, nemmeno in questi casi, di personaggi che accostano in loro nome al *brand* semplicemente per promuoverlo o agire da *testimonial* o *influencer*, ma di coloro che con il marchio si identificano, e che, raccontando loro stessi, in modo autentico, diretto, e con il coinvolgimento del pubblico, realizzano *brand storytelling*.

È stata svolta, inoltre, anche un'analisi quantitativa MANOVA, che ha dimostrato l'esistenza di una relazione significativa tra l'essere un utente che utilizza Instagram, l'acquisto del prodotto, ed il genere dell'utilizzatore, nonché l'esistenza di una significativa relazione tra gli acquirenti del prodotto e le due variabili dipendenti, con una rilevante incidenza sulla propensione all'acquisto data dall'essere già un utilizzatore del brand. L'appartenenza ad un genere o all'altro incide in relazione all'impatto dello *storytelling* sull'intenzione di acquisto, mentre il punteggio medio dell'influenza dello *storytelling* sulla volontà di acquisto non varia a seconda del genere maschile o femminile.

I dati statistici presi in considerazione permettono, dunque, di verificare che in concreto, la narrazione di marca che diventa racconto della vita quotidiana della *celebrity* che incarna ed identifica il brand non assume una incidenza decisiva ai fini della volontà di acquisto, ma, piuttosto, si rivela fondamentale più in una fase antecedente (*consideration*), e soprattutto anche in una fase successiva, laddove si tratta di incrementare la *loyalty* del consumatore.

Una volta esposti i risultati quantitativi della *survey* somministrata, e dopo averli analizzati e presi in considerazione sotto il profilo delle loro correlazioni statistiche, vengono mostrate le conclusioni e le implicazioni manageriali che dalla ricerca svolta è possibile trarre.

Emerge che l'uso del racconto di marca, specialmente per i brand che utilizzano Instagram, può essere sicuramente accresciuto, per avere un impatto maggiore sulla *purchase intention* e sulle vendite. Il fulcro dell'implementazione deve essere la maggiore enfasi sul legame tra consumatore e *brand*, in modo da creare un maggiore coinvolgimento dei destinatari del racconto. Se è vero che la letteratura indica nello *storytelling* uno strumento effettivo per incrementare l'attrattività del brand verso i consumatori, è altrettanto un risultato concreto messo in luce dall'analisi qualitativa e quantitativa svolta quello secondo cui per ottenere risultati ancor più efficaci in termini di *purchase intention*, è necessario collegare gli strumenti di promozione del brand in modo più efficace, predisponendo strumenti di acquisto più diretti, che riducano lo spazio tra il primo

approccio, e la transazione. Inoltre, nel modo in cui si raccontano le storie, è necessario puntare, più che su ogni altra cosa, sull'autenticità, che associata alla verità ed alla realtà può manifestare effetti più che positivi sulle intenzioni di acquisto, come anche suggerito da ricerche passate. Tale aspetto è stato ampiamente focalizzato anche nelle interviste qualitative, soprattutto da parte degli *influencers* che hanno risposto alle domande, che hanno evidenziato come anche quando le storie vengono proposte al pubblico tramite Instagram, sia necessario puntare su prodotti che possano incrementare la credibilità, piuttosto che su una modalità di promozione non coerente con i propri valori.

Nella scelta degli strumenti di brand *storytelling*, la credibilità può essere, difatti, massimizzata per ottenere un racconto che i consumatori sentano vicino, in contrapposizione alle "storie" che vengono percepite come artificiali o contraffatte.

Si dimostra, in ogni caso, che pur esistendo sicuramente altri strumenti attraverso i quali fare *brand storytelling*, alternativi alle forme tradizionali di marketing, allo stato attuale la strada più efficace e che prospetta risultati più utili nella narrazione di marca, al fine di generare partecipazione, interazione ed identificazione nel consumatore, resta l'uso di Instagram, attraverso tutte le sue funzionalità, che permettono di mostrare una significativa influenza sugli utenti in termini di acquisti.