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FACULDADE DE ECONOMIA
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING ON CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

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Dissertation

Master in Management

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2022

"Tell me a fact and I'll learn.

Tell me the truth and I'll believe.

But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever."

(Indian Proverb)

Acknowledgements

Abstract

We live in an era where we witness constant changes and advances every day, especially at a technological level. Both consumers and organizations are becoming increasingly digital. This new and more digital consumer requires that the use of digital be managed in a much more interesting and challenging way, and engagement with these new consumers is essential to preserve the attractiveness of a brand. Content in a storytelling format is constantly growing and is increasingly used as part of companies' content creation strategy. The use of storytelling as a consumer engagement strategy is increasing in several domains; however, there are still few researches relating consumer engagement to advertising in a storytelling format. For this reason, it is essential to understand how digital storytelling relates to consumer engagement.

This investigation, therefore, aims to understand the impact of the various components of digital storytelling on the different dimensions of consumer engagement. To respond to the objective of the investigation, a literature review was carried out focusing on three themes: content marketing, storytelling, and consumer engagement. Through a qualitative and exploratory methodology, four focus groups directed at the Z generation were conducted to understand digital storytelling's impact on consumer engagement.

Thus, through a content analysis performed using a qualitative analysis support software, WebQDA, it was possible to demonstrate that there is a relationship between the components that make up the stories and the engagement they provide to the brands. The components most valued by consumers are, respectively, the message, the plot, the verisimilitude, the music and the characters. However, the message is the storytelling component that most impacts consumer engagement.

Keywords: Content Marketing; Digital Storytelling; Storytelling Components; Consumer Engagement; Advertisement

Resumo

Atualmente, vivemos numa era onde todos os dias assistimos a mudanças e avanços constantes, principalmente a nível tecnológico. Tanto os consumidores como as organizações se estão a tornar cada mais digitais. Este novo consumidor mais digital exige que o uso do digital seja gerido de uma forma muito mais interessante e desafiante, e o *engagement* com estes novos consumidores é fundamental para preservar a atratividade de uma marca. O conteúdo em formato de *storytelling* está em constante crescimento e é cada vez mais utilizado como parte da estratégia das empresas no que diz respeito à criação de conteúdo. O uso de *storytelling* como estratégia de *engagement* do consumidor está a aumentar em vários domínios, no entanto, ainda são escassas as pesquisas que relacionam o *engagement* do consumidor à publicidade em formato de *storytelling*. Por esta razão, torna-se extremamente importante perceber de que forma o *storytelling* digital se relaciona com o *engagement* do consumidor.

Esta investigação visa, portanto, compreender o impacto das diversas componentes do *storytelling* digital nas diversas dimensões do *engagement* do consumidor. De forma responder ao objetivo da investigação, foi realizada uma revisão de literatura centrada em três temas: o marketing de conteúdo, o *storytelling*, e o *engagement* do consumidor. Através de uma metodologia qualitativa e exploratória, foram realizados quatro *focus group* dirigidos à geração Z, de forma a compreender, então, o impacto do *storytelling* digital no *engagement* do consumidor.

Assim, através de uma análise de conteúdo realizada com recurso a um software de apoio à análise qualitativa, WebQDA, foi possível demonstrar que, de facto, existe uma relação entre os componentes que constituem as histórias e o *engagement* que proporcionam às marcas. As componentes mais valorizadas pelos consumidores são, respetivamente, a mensagem, o enredo, a verossimilhança, a música e as personagens. No entanto, a mensagem é a componente do *storytelling* que mais impacta o *engagement* do consumidor.

Palavras-chave: Marketing de Conteúdo; *Storytelling* Digital; Componentes do *Stoytelling*; *Engagement* do consumidor; Anúncio

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1. Introduction

This investigation aims to study the impact of digital storytelling on consumer engagement. Apart from personal interest in digital marketing, this theme was motivated by the relevance of the current digital growth. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the digital transformation or, in other words, digitalisation and, consequently, increased the use of the majority of brands' digital communication tools.

The confinement generated by the pandemic triggered consumption from home (Bunkanwanicha et al., 2020). Besides, because of the advancement of digital transformation, together with the complex and unstable economic time caused by the pandemic, companies were forced to increase operational efficiency and improve the customer experience in order to survive (Liu, 2021). According to new research, more than half of consumer interactions and companies' products and services during the pandemic became digitalised (Liu, 2021).

As we can see, both people and organisations have become more digital (Bunkanwanicha et al., 2020). Moreover, this new digital-first consumer demands a much more interesting and challenging way to use digital (Tanui, 2021). Because of this, it becomes relevant to study storytelling on digital platforms, not only for being considered the future of digital marketing (Tanui, 2021) but also for being considered a crucial tool for understanding consumer behaviour and attitudes toward brands (Grębosz-Krawczyk, 2020).

Brand storytelling is the art based on designing an organization's identity through the use of narratives and different storytelling techniques that positively contribute not only to triggering emotional responses but also to establishing meaningful connections with the public (Baker, 2021). Positively or negatively, these emotions generated by the brand storytelling help people store the information (Grębosz-Krawczyk, 2020).

According to Digital Marketing Institute, 92% of consumers prefer storytelling ads (DMI, 2017). Given this, storytelling has become extremely important in the business-to-consumer (B2C) market in order to have successful brand management (Grębosz-Krawczyk, 2020). In addition to storytelling, video content has also been shown to be of great importance to consumers. According to Animoto, 93% of consumers said the video

is helpful when purchasing a product (Rozario-Ospino, 2021). When the two are combined, showing storytelling through a video, the result can only be good.

It is much easier and more attractive for customers to understand a product, a service or even a brand when using video content. Consequently, an effective way to create engaging, attractive and informative content for consumers is through the use of video marketing (Raviv, 2021). Research has shown that when published in a storytelling format, video ads on social media are more likely to be seen than straight-sell ad formats (Coker et al., 2021). A plausible explanation for this may be that the storytelling format of ads leads consumers to feel more intimately connected with the product's core and, therefore, closer to the brand or, in other words, more engaged.

"The use of storytelling as a customer engagement strategy is on the rise in a range of domains" (van Laer et al., 2019, p. 136). For these reasons, we concluded that it is extremely essencial to discover: How do storytelling components influence the different dimensions of consumer engagement?

Authors such as Dessart et al. (2019), Pera and Viglia (2016) and Pulizzi (2012) argue that content in storytelling format is constantly growing and that it is increasingly used as part of companies' strategy with regard to content creation. However, research relating consumer engagement to advertising in storytelling format is still scarce (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019).

Therefore, the present investigation aims to fill this gap, helping to understand how the various components of storytelling influence the different dimensions of consumer engagement. For this, it is necessary to respond to seven specific objectives:

(1) Identify the most relevant components of storytelling.

(2) Identify the different dimensions of consumer engagement.

(3) Understand how the plot of a story influences consumer engagement.

(4) Understand how characters in a story influence consumer engagement.

(5) Understand how the verisimilitude of a story influences consumer engagement.

(6) Understand how the message of a story influences consumer engagement.

(7) Understand how the music of a story influences consumer engagement.

The empirical component of this investigation is carried out through qualitative analysis, more precisely, a content analysis of the corpus of analysis of the study. Unlike most studies on consumer engagement, this one analyses how the audience that sees ads with storytelling content reacts in terms of engagement.

As a whole, this document is structured in five chapters comprising the introduction, literature review, methodology, findings and discussion, and conclusions. The introduction constitutes the first and present chapter, where contextualization is first made, followed by the explanation of the research problem and respective research question, and also a description of the research objectives and the respective methodology used to achieve those objectives. The literature review, present in the second chapter, seeks to deepen the three main concepts of this investigation, content marketing, storytelling and consumer engagement, and establish a relationship between advertising with storytelling content and consumer engagement. The methodology, present in the third chapter, presents the conceptual framework of analysis together with the research questions, the general and specific objectives defined for this research, the methodology and the techniques used, together with their due justifications and the data coding. The fourth chapter, findings and discussion, exposes all the analysis of the collected data and its appropriate discussion. Finally, the last chapter presents the main conclusions drawn from this study, the theoretical and practical contributions of the study to management, and the limitations and suggestions for future investigations.

2. Literature review

This chapter is divided into three large groups that theoretically contribute to the clarification of concepts that are critical for the development of this investigation: content marketing, storytelling and consumer engagement. Regarding content marketing, its concept and evolution are developed with a special focus on digital. In relation to storytelling, its concept and evolution are elaborated and, later, its components are deepened. With regard to consumer engagement, its concept and evolution, the dimensions that constitute it and its relationship with storytelling are clarified.

2.1. Content Marketing

Content marketing has been around for longer than most people recognize (Beard et al., 2021), in fact, this form of marketing has been around as long as the internet (Faustino, 2018). It emerged as an exclusive marketing discipline that strategically and tactically stands out from the others, and it has objectives, strategies and tactics that, in practice, have remained constant over the millennia (Beard et al., 2021).

Du Plessis (2017) recognizes that it is still considered a challenge to define the term content marketing since it depends not only on the context in which it is inserted but also on the different perspectives of practitioners and academics. However, it is indisputable that marketers are increasingly using this type of marketing as a way to replace disruptive advertising and attract more attention to the brand since content marketing is perceived as ideal for emotionally connecting with consumers (Du Plessis, 2017). It is increasingly noticeable by brands that without a content marketing strategy at the heart of marketing, all available technology tools become worthless (Pulizzi, 2012).

For Pulizzi (2012), the definition of content marketing reflects the consistent creation by the brand itself of relevant, attractive and valuable content, used with the main objective of generating positive behaviour from a customer or prospect of the brand. Alternatively, according to the CMI (2012), content marketing is a strategic marketing approach that aims not only to create and deliver valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience but also to drive profitable customer action. In the same line of thought, Hollebeek and Macky (2019) identify digital content marketing as a strategic marketing approach that aims to create and communicate valuable and relevant brand content

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on digital platforms to current or potential customers in order to enhance their engagement, trust and relationships with the brand. (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019)

Content marketing is a creation process that, indirectly, through a piece of educational, professional, tutorial or simply entertainment content, enhances the creation of authority and the attraction of potential new customers without resorting to any kind of direct marketing of a brand's products or services (Faustino, 2018). Pulizzi (2012) argues that content marketing is the idea that all brands should behave and think like media companies, that is, they should tell stories in all their forms, to consequently enhance customer attraction and retention.

Increasing sales, saving costs, improving customers and their loyalty, and focusing on content as a profit centre are the four main reasons and benefits that drive enterprises to use content marketing (CMI, 2012). Besides these, other incentives such as generating organic traffic to websites, generating organic leads, increasing brand awareness and reducing customers' acquisition costs lead to the use of a content marketing strategy (Faustino, 2018).

The antecedents of digital content marketing include several motivations: functional, to provide information about a new product or service; hedonic, to provide entertainment to the brand's audience; and authenticity, to demonstrate the brand's values and mission. In turn, the recognized consequences of digital marketing content include several variables: cognitive, emotional or behavioural engagement; the trust and attitude of the brand; and brand capital from a consumer and business perspective (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

Pulizzi (2012) identifies three barriers that existed around content marketing and that, over time, ceased to exist, enhancing its growth:

- Content acceptance: Nowadays, all brands, even if not considered renowned brands, can release content that the target audience will easily accept and get involved with.

- Talent: Journalists were a means to help create and communicate content. However in the past, working for something other than a media company was for journalists a career defect. Currently, this stigma is practically extinct, many journalists and writers work in the most diverse areas and help in the creation of excellent and compelling stories.

- Technology: Technological advances have allowed the launch of content on the web to become easier, more immediate and less costly.

Corporate magazines, newsletters, blog posts, videos, webinars, podcasts and even fully functional media sites are some of the formats used for content marketing that Pulizzi (2012) identifies. From the same point of view, Faustino (2018) also argues that in a content marketing strategy there are different types of formats in which the content produced can emerge, such as content blogs, social networks, email marketing, landing pages, e-books, videos, infographics, podcasts, apps, among others. However, producing a text for a blog, publishing a video on Youtube or making a post on Facebook is not enough, it is crucial to understand how each of these content formats works to comprehend where and how the content should be communicated and, above all, how it can amplify the intended message so that it reaches as many people as possible (Faustino, 2018).

Arrivé (2021) argues that 'brand content', 'branded content', 'social publishing', 'social content' and 'branded entertainment' are all terms used to refer to the activity of content production and are all practices encompassed in content marketing. A content marketing strategy can be used across all story channels (print, online, in-person, mobile, social, etc), at any stage of the buying process (from attention-oriented strategies to retention and loyalty strategies) and can include multiple purchases groups (CMI, 2012). However, content marketing only truly creates value for the public when it provides informative or entertaining content about a particular brand (Lou et al., 2019).

2.2. Storytelling

2.2.1. Storytelling Background and Definitions

Stories are the most common communication format among humans (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019). In marketing, storytelling is used as a communication tool between brands and consumers and aims to transmit messages to consumers by creating a story or imposing a story-like structure on branded content (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019).

Storytelling ads are currently at the centre of marketing (Pulizzi, 2012) and emerged with the aim of organizations to ensure attention, understanding and retention of content, seeking to capture the public's interest and be accepted by it. Pulizzi (2012) argues that to

take advantage of all the tools that social media make available is crucial to establish strategies with the core basis of creating compelling stories.

Storytelling is about creating an intimate relationship with the public, in which values, goals, emotions and expectations are constantly shared, creating long-term relationships, far beyond the presentation of a product or a motivation to buy (Carrilho & Markus, 2014). Under the same perspective, Sole and Wilson (2002) see storytelling as the sharing of different knowledge and experiences through narratives and anecdotes to communicate lessons, complex ideas, concepts and causal connections. Alternatively, a set of distinct scientific research has generated the basis for an empirical understanding of storytelling as an aid to memory, aiming to create and strengthen emotional connections and recognise and identify brands of any type (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010).

As the concept has evolved over the years, recent research suggests that brand storytelling "is the use of literary storytelling techniques and narrative discourse applied specifically to marketing communications to promote brands to consumers in an engaging and meaningful way" (Mills & Robson, 2020, p. 163). Simultaneously, Nakhil (2019) believes that brand storytelling represents the sharing of qualities and beliefs with the audience in order to establish a connection at a mental and emotional level. When the public creates a more emotional connection with the brand through the story it tells, greater proximity with the values and emotions of consumers is established, which will consequently result in a higher competitive advantage over the brand's competitors (Faustino, 2018).

Stories can be a powerful way of representing and conveying complex and multidimensional ideas, and for this reason, storytelling has become very effective in multiple domains (Sole & Wilson, 2002). Well-designed and well-told stories can convey both information and emotion, both the explicit and the tacit, and both the core and the context (Snowden, 2000). Since brands are known for the sum of all their behaviours and communications, that is, factors that define customers' experience with the product or company, storytelling becomes essential for the success of any brand (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010).

Nowadays, due to digital information overload and ad-blocking technologies, marketers face significant challenges in creating relevant and engaging ads instead of ads that people find annoying interruptions (Dessart, 2018). Storytelling is seen as an effective advertising format to send messages and promote communication (Padgett & Allen, 1997). As an alternative to other advertising formats, storytelling emerges in order to overcome barriers

when it comes to capturing attention and creating digital engagement with video advertising (Coker et al., 2021). In addition to being capable of engaging and entertaining consumers, ads that tell stories are more effective in communicating and explaining how products can be used to create meaning (Escalas, 2004).

Contrary to the more factual ones, most storytelling ads focus on sharing brand values through more emotional stories instead of presenting the actual product or service (Dessart, 2018). The results of engagement between the customer and the brand through narrative persuasion are evidently different from the results of traditional advertising. Narratives psychologically affect individuals, leading them to give more emotional responses and reducing their ability to argue (van Laer et al., 2019). The differences between storytelling ads and factual ads lead to different types of processing by the audience (Dessart, 2018). Factual ads are overtly persuasive and tend to be processed in a cognitive way (Escalas, 2007). Storytelling ads, on the contrary, are not overtly persuasive but rather affective in nature, so they are processed in a narrative way and are more likely to allow the consumer to be unconsciously carried away (Escalas, 2004).

This phenomenon, in which consumers mentally enter the world evoked by the story, is called narrative transportation (van Laer et al., 2014). According to Houghton (2021), narrative transportation, or in other words, absorption in the story, is the main process that differentiates stories from other communication formats. Through this phenomenon, our senses are enveloped by stories and end up mentally producing experiences identical to those in the real world. These mental experiences are, in fact, vivid mental imagery that can result in affective and cognitive responses that can consequently lead to changes in consumers' beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviour. Thus, by identifying with the story or its characters, consumers end up attributing meaning to the brands and the products used by them. (Houghton, 2021)

Ford et al. (2016) state that brands use storytelling in multiple ways. There are brands with good stories but do not convey a clear message or a connection between the story and the brand, and they consider that these brands apply storytelling only because of the benefits of this content compared to other types of advertising. However, the lack of a clear message or a story connection with the brand often means that the potential of storytelling is not fully exploited. On the other hand, some brands use storytelling to communicate the benefits of the product, to portray an advertisement message, and there are also those

brands where their values are fully conveyed through the story (Ford et al., 2016).

According to Sole and Wilson (2002), using storytelling to share experiences not only triggers the trust-building, the cultivation of norms, and the transfer of tacit knowledge, it also generates emotional connections. Furthermore, he also argues that, in order to be successful, the use of stories depends on the appropriate choice of moments for sharing the story and the clarity of the goals of knowledge shared in the story (Sole & Wilson, 2002).

All people love to hear and be inspired by good stories. Stories that reflect overcoming, success, happiness and love usually generate a very positive impact, as the audience easily identifies with these same stories or wishes, at least, to go through the same experiences lived in the narrative. The more inspiring the story shared by the brand, the greater the emotional connection established with its audience (Faustino, 2018).

In digital marketing, applying all the storytelling concepts in the different communication formats can truly make a difference in the public's perspective regarding a particular brand. Framing storytelling in digital marketing involves telling appealing stories that use the various resources available on the internet, namely text, image, video and sound, as a way of promoting a brand (Faustino, 2018).

Brand communication must cross all channels to be efficient. Today's consumers seek access to more social and visual content than text content. Recognizing the importance of the most relevant communication channels for consumers and adapting stories to the different media can make a difference for brands. However, brands must not only adjust the communication to each channel but also preserve the communication' coherence and the overall message of the brand (Faustino, 2018).

Lambert (2010) sees the storytelling process as a journey. As such, in writing the guide that would help storytellers along the path of creating a relevant digital story, he defined seven steps that outlined the fundamentals of digital storytelling:

- Step 1: Owning Your Insights

  This first step helps storytellers discover and clarify the theme of the story. They must decide what story they want to tell and define not only the theme but also the true meaning of the narrative. This process can be time-consuming, but it is essential to help the storytellers evolve their vision and wisdom. In addition, it is still necessary to define the reasons that lead to the choice of the theme and to tell it at that moment, for

whom the story is directed and how the story shows who the company is. When we listen to stories, we look for answers that we can relate to our own lives, so the way a story is told depends on the audience it is intended to have. In this sense, all the details are relevant: what you want to say, how it is transmitted, what the audience already knows, what they still don't know and what you want them to know (Lambert, 2010).

- Step 2: Owning Your Emotions

In this second step, it is time to discover the emotions that make up the story. This process helps to decide which emotions storytellers want to include in the narrative and how they would like to share them with the audience. To decide which emotions storytellers want to include in the narrative, they should reflect on the emotions that were experienced when they shared the story with someone, identify at which points in the narrative those emotions emerged and, in case there was more than one emotion, it is still necessary to understand if they contrasted. Having defined this, storytellers can now start thinking about how the audience will emotionally connect with their story. To determine how they will share emotions, they must reflect on which emotions will help the audience to better understand the narrative and whether it is possible to convey these emotions without directly using the words that describe them. It is important to pay attention to the fact that a story can have several meanings and it is crucial that the emotions conveyed are honest and not too exaggerated so that the audience does not distrust them and truly connects with the story (Lambert, 2010).

- Step 3: Finding The Moment

This step aims to help storytellers find the reason that made them want to tell a story about a particular theme, subject or feeling, and for that, they must identify a single moment (the moment of change) that they can use to illustrate their vision. Our lives are made up of an infinite number of moments; however, some moments are lived with greater emotion and meaning than others. The moment of change can be marked by great emotions (memorable or dramatic) or even happen without the storyteller realizing it or understanding its meaning in his life. To understand and find the moments of change that have occurred in our lives, it is necessary to reflect on our intuitions and emotions. Finding this moment of change will consequently make the story more compelling. Audiences like to hear stories about change because they are looking for

answers about changing their own lives. (Lambert, 2010).

- Step 4: Seeing Your Story

As these are digital stories, it is essential to understand how the use of visual and sound choices influences the audience. The topic of visual choices is central during the narrative design process for storytellers to consider how the use of images will reflect their stories. To help in this process, Lambert (2010) argues that the best way for narrators to "see" their stories is to: describe the images they imagine; understand their meaning; find or create these images; and, finally, figure out the best way to use them to communicate exactly the intended meaning. Direct images used to reflect a moment or object in a literal sense are called explicit imagery and are useful for conveying necessary story details or helping to set the scene for the audience. To define which explicit imagery are essential to the story, it is necessary to understand whether the audience will be able to perceive the meaning of the particular detail if they cannot see that image. If the image in question can convey another meaning, then it is an implicit imagery. Implicit imagery can be used through visual metaphors and are useful for representing meaning other than the explicit or literal meaning of an image. A tree, for example, can mean stability in a given story (Lambert, 2010).

- Step 5: Hearing Your Story

For Lambert (2010), recording the narrator's voice is what makes a digital story truly digital. At this point in the creation process, the emotional tone of the narrative has already been identified and sound is one of the best ways to convey it: through the way the story is told, the words used, and the sound and background music that work together with the narrative. Since it is a digital story, the voice not only tells a narrative but also demonstrates the essence of the narrator, his character and the connection he has with the lived and narrated experience (Lambert, 2010). The narrator's voice is truly significant in the process, as it is a testament to his fragility and strength. Ambient and everyday sounds help create a sense of space for the audience; they can add complexity to the digital story but help to position settings and feelings in the audience's perspective. In addition, the minimalist use of music enhances the narrative by bringing rhythm and character, as music has the ability to alter the visual perception of individuals (Lambert, 2010).

- Step 6: Assembling Your Story

At this level, the storyteller should be ready to assemble his story by composing his script and storyboard based on his notes and images. For Lambert (2010), there is almost always a "backstory" behind a narrative. In this sense, it is important to choose which details to disclose, depending on the degree of knowledge that the audience has about the storyteller since it will never be possible to convey all the details. Realizing the process of telling the story and reading the audience's reaction is key to understanding the structure of the story. In this process, it is important to understand everything that might interest the target audience, where they might be most lost or disoriented, and how they are involved in the narrative. Building the story takes time and is not easy. However, the most important thing is to keep it simple.

- Step 7: Sharing Your Story

Clearly knowing the purpose of creating the narrative and knowing the audience well is a good start in determining how to share the story (Lambert, 2010). Therefore, it is important in this last step to review the context in which the story was initially described, to determine the relevant information to be included for sharing the story and to really understand who the target audience of the story is. Understanding the presentation setting in which the audience will watch the digital story is another important factor to consider, as it will help determine what kind of contextual material should accompany the play.

According to van Laer et al. (2019), some decisions must be made in the context of narrative marketing practices. With everything that the digital age we currently live in requires, the decisions of marketers when intending to tell digital stories must take into account three important issues: the way a story should be made, by whom the narrative should be delivered and what are the target audiences to which the story should be oriented.

Following the same line of thought, Faustino (2018) identifies six fundamental principles that should be taken into consideration when creating a digital marketing strategy based on storytelling:

(1) Understand the target audience: Understanding the preferences, passions, needs and pains of the target audience will make it easier to build a good story. By communi-

cating directly to this audience by appealing to their emotions and desires, it will be more effortless to capture their attention.

(2) Create a character or a strong message: Brands must create a meaningful message, and the character must contain all the characteristics of the target audience in order to create a stronger connection and identification with it.

(3) Establish an emotional narrative: The stronger the emotional appeal of a story, the greater the connection created with the audience. This type of message incites the audience's emotion, generating a much greater humanization of the brand, which, therefore, translates into a deeper connection with the target audience.

(4) Engage the target audience in the story: By collecting testimonials, videos and photographs from customers, it is possible to involve the audience in the creation of the narrative, which is an excellent way to make them feel an integral part of the brand's history.

(5) Be creative, interactive and visual: Nowadays, it is necessary to work more with visual channels (photos and videos) than with traditional text content. The more creative, interactive and visual the content is, the more likely it is to have an impact on the target audience.

(6) Include a strong and impactful call-to-action: It is important to include a powerful call-to-action at the end of the communication, as it is an excellent way to end a message and leave an action for the user to take.

Through storytelling, a brand has the ability to communicate in a more human, cohesive and impactful way, which consequently results in a more genuine connection between the brand and its customers (Faustino, 2018).

2.2.2. Storytelling Components

Chronology and causality are two relevant strategic components of the narrative structure, which characterizes the content of a narrative (Escalas, 2004). Chronology is defined as the organization of the elements of a story according to a temporal dimension in order to allow the audience to recognize a beginning, a middle and an end. Causality is interpreted as the connection between the events of a story and the respective causal inferences to allow listeners to establish causal relationships between the different components of a story

(Dessart & Pitardi, 2019).

According to Dessart and Pitardi (2019), these structural elements contribute to an environment with social, physical and temporal components, as listeners evoke the story through mental imagery, making them part of the story and living it from the inside.

The storytelling content includes some components such as plot, characters, verisimilitude (Escalas, 2004; Pera & Viglia, 2016; van Laer et al., 2014), message (Fog et al., 2005) and music (Greenwood, 2011; Lambert, 2010).

2.2.2.1. Plot

The plot is characterized by the temporal sequence of events that directly or indirectly affect a character, resulting, therefore, from the interplay between the two components of the narrative structure, chronology and causality (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019). The purpose of a story event comes from the story's plot, thus allowing listeners to construct the entire plot mentally (Escalas, 2004).

Kent (2015) states that the plot in a story is the equivalent of a premise in an argument: it is what defines the kind of story that will be told. As mentioned above, this component of storytelling refers to the main events of a story structured in a certain way by the author, not being, therefore, about a single event but a series of interrelated and coherent events (Kent, 2015).

The audience's involvement in the plot of the stories is revealed by the fact that consumers feel touched by the meaning of the stories, which inevitably ends up triggering certain emotions, especially when the stories reach their climax. Furthermore, audiences tend to show a solid and enduring cognitive focus on the content of stories when they get a certain level of attention (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019).

2.2.2.2. Characters

To tell a compelling story, it is essential to use attractive and captivating plotlines, create convincing characters and capture the audience's understanding (Kent, 2015). Characters are created in the plot of a story (Kang et al., 2020) and are the element that allows the story's audience to experience beliefs, purposes and emotions. Together with the plot, they facilitate the approximation of the stories to real-life experiences, which is why they are the main drivers in generating empathy between the audience and the events in the stories

(Pera & Viglia, 2016).

The main characters usually appear with opponents and helpers to solve the problems or conflicts of a story (Kang et al., 2020). The identification of characters by the audience is enhanced when it is faced with information about what the characters do, want, feel and experience (Dessart, 2018). The characters' behaviour and mindset are, therefore, vital elements of cognition and understanding of the story's plot (Nicoli et al., 2021). Moreover, consumers of a narrative may feel like the characters in the story, ending up vicariously participating in their experience and mentally simulating the narrative's events (Yildiz & Sever, 2021).

In summary, stories composed of characters with particular goals and motivations make people feel empathy for them and indirectly experience the story through them. Thus, the presence of characters in a narrative proves to be a relevant condition not only for consumers' involvement in a narrative but also for the consequent success of the narrative (Dessart, 2018).

2.2.2.3. Verisimilitude

Verisimilitude is another essential element in storytelling as it represents the probability that the events in the stories actually happened (van Laer et al., 2014). Stories authenticity affects the trust and acceptance of the audience and, consequently, their involvement in the plot. Similar to the plot and characters, the degree of verisimilitude also affects a listener's perception of approaching stories to real-life experiences (Green, 2004).

By making the stories as close to reality as possible, the audience tends to intensify their level of reflection, consideration and understanding of the message's power conveyed (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019). Besides, the more authentic the story, the more willing people are to act, either by sharing the content of the story or by supporting the message conveyed in the stories (Pera & Viglia, 2016).

2.2.2.4. Message

Stories are told, heard, and responded to convey and absorb messages or ideas (Kuan et al., 2012). The message functions as a central theme throughout the story in the form of an ideological or moral statement (Fog et al., 2005).

Through storytelling, it is possible to create a position in which the receivers of the sto-

ries are interested and with their attention entirely focused on the message (Santos & da Silva, 2017). The message of a story can be so powerful and universally compelling that it can unite people worldwide because of its theme (Fog et al., 2005).

For most companies, storytelling as a branding tool consists of using stories to communicate messages that reflect positively on the company's brand. However, the message must be previously well defined and developed so that the public can interpret it. There is no reason to tell stories without having a well-defined message, at least from a strategic point of view (Fog et al., 2005).

The message of a story is inseparable from all other storytelling components, as without them, no message could have been generated and transmitted effectively (Santos & da Silva, 2017).

2.2.2.5. Music

According to Kuan et al. (2012), digital storytelling consists of a short video narrative, told in the first person and created by combining still and moving images and music or other sounds. As mentioned before, the soundtrack is one of the elements to consider when building a digital story (Greenwood, 2011).

Music can serve many purposes in the context of a digital story. Huron (1989) refers to various capacities where music can contribute to more effective storytelling. When it comes to entertainment, choosing good music can contribute to the effectiveness of an ad simply by making it more attractive and less intrusive. Music can also be used in various structural roles, for example, to tie together a sequence of images, a series of episodes, or a list of product appeals, or to enhance or emphasize more dramatic moments or episodes. The use of music can also contribute to more significant memorization, whether of the product, the ad, or the brand. One of the peculiarities of human hearing and cognition is that music tends to linger in the listener's mind, and consumers prefer products or brands that evoke some degree of recognition or familiarity. Music can also help to engage or captivate viewers who make up the target audience. Musical styles have long been identified with various social and demographic groups and can help target a specific market (Huron, 1989).

2.3. Consumer Engagement

2.3.1. Consumer Engagement Background and Definitions

Nowadays, it becomes increasingly challenging to maintain a lasting relationship with consumers, as they are more and more impatient and demanding, with greater expectations and less and less tolerant of errors, making it harder to reach loyalty. Consumers end up switching quickly from one brand to another if an offer that they think is better comes along. Bearing this in mind, engagement with consumers is key to preserving a brand's attractiveness. Customers with a higher level of engagement end up buying more, promoting and recommending the brand more and consequently being more loyal. (van Doorn et al., 2010).

Companies are more quickly beginning to recognize the need to focus on building personal relationships with customers that foster interactions (Hollebeek, 2011). Vivek et al. (2012) say that there are several different concepts of the term consumer engagement and that, despite being a concept already widely explored in all areas, there are some gaps regarding its meaning in the field of marketing, since there is no consensus on the nature of engagement or its role in marketing.

According to Claffey and Brady (2019), consumer engagement is the psychological process that delineates the underlying mechanisms in the construction of consumer relationships. And Patterson et al. (2006) add that consumer engagement represents the level of physical, cognitive and emotional presence of a customer in their relationship with an institution.

There are also other perspectives regarding consumer engagement. Hollebeek (2011, p. 7) views customer brand engagement as "the level of an individual customer's motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind characterised by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity in direct brand interactions". Under the same perspective, the findings of Vivek et al. (2012, p. 127) conclude that consumer engagement is "the intensity of an individual's participation in and connection with an organization's offerings and/ or organizational activities, which either the customer or the organization initiate".

Mollen and Wilson (2010) define brand engagement within specific online contexts de-

scribing, therefore, consumer engagement as a cognitive and affective responsibility that aims to preserve an active relationship with a particular brand through the website or other computer-mediated entities designed to communicate brand value. More recently, engagement has been seen as a behavioural aspect that stimulates interactions based not only on clicks (participation) but also on viewing and reading content (consumption) (Khan, 2017).

Currently, competing for the public's attention is a great challenge for brands. For this reason, brands must apply diverse content communication processes in the various existing digital spaces to attract as many users as possible and achieve a sustainable level of engagement with them. By generating positive engagement with their consumers and audience, brands can consequently benefit from increased loyalty and reputation (Nicoli et al., 2021). By evaluating brands' performance and predicting its relational outcomes, consumer engagement is recognized by many theorists as superior to consumer satisfaction and consumer repurchase behaviour (Claffey & Brady, 2019).

2.3.2. Consumer Engagement Dimensions

Previous studies reveal that consumer engagement is a multidimensional, dynamic and highly contextual concept (Claffey & Brady, 2019). For this reason, according to a specific set of situational conditions, different states of engagement can be generated with different levels of intensity. Regarding the multidimensional perspective, consumer engagement highlights the relative importance of different cognitive, emotional and behavioural combinations.

2.3.2.1. Cognitive Dimension

The cognitive dimension focuses on consumers' thoughts and mental elaboration (Harrigan et al., 2017). It reflects the concentration and interest in a specific object: company, brand or social network (Hollebeek et al., 2014). According to Dessart and Pitardi (2019), mental elaboration is represented by a set of lasting and active mental states that a consumer experiences, such as attention and absorption.

Attention represents the cognitive availability and the amount of time the consumer spends thinking and paying attention to the object of engagement (Hollebeek, 2011), which, in this case, are the storytelling ads.

Absorption represents the level of concentration and immersion in which the con-

sumer finds himself with the object of engagement (Vivek et al., 2012).

2.3.2.2. Emotional Dimension

The emotional dimension focuses on consumers' feelings and reflects their state of emotional activity related to the brand or company (Hollebeek et al., 2014). This state of emotional activity is represented by the summative and lasting level of emotions, such as enthusiasm and enjoyment, of a consumer in relation to the object of engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Enthusiasm is the intrinsic level of excitement and interest concerning the object of engagement (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019), and represents an enduring and effective state in relation to that object (So et al., 2014).

Enjoyment reflects the consumer's sense of pleasure and happiness derived from the interaction with the object of engagement (Dessart et al., 2015).

2.3.2.3. Behavioural Dimension

The behavioural dimension focuses on consumers' actions. It reflects the state of consumer behaviour in relation to the brand or company: a consumer's energy, effort, and time spent on an engagement object (Hollebeek et al., 2014). This behaviour can be materialized in learning, sharing and endorsing (Dessart et al., 2016).

Sharing represents the act of providing information, content, ideas, experience or other resources (van Doorn et al., 2010).

Learning, instead, represents the active or passive search for those resources (van Doorn et al., 2010).

Finally, **endorsing** represents the act of sanctioning, showing support, or referring to resources shared by the object of engagement (van Doorn et al., 2010).

2.3.3. Storytelling and its impact on consumer engagement

Previous studies reveal that plot, characters, and verisimilitude stimulate consumer engagement, triggering cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses in a particular sequence and with variable intensities and valences (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019).

According to Kang et al. (2020), storytelling ads provoke more favourable emotional

responses and drive the audience's intention to share information about the product. This sharing intention results in greater consumer engagement, more precisely cognitive consumer engagement.

Based on Kemp et al. (2021), story content is positively related not only to emotional content but also to the personal connection an individual feels towards an organisation's products. This personal connection is a crucial step towards customer engagement.

Concerning Nakhil (2019), brands use storytelling to build a mental and emotional relationship with their consumers. This type of approach drives the transmission of information and ends up evoking feelings in a way that reshapes the consumer's positive experience, which increases their engagement with the brand.

3. Methodology

This chapter will identify and describe the methods and techniques used to achieve the objectives proposed for this investigation. The present section is divided into four groups: (1) the conceptual framework of analysis together with the research questions; (2) the research objectives, where the general and specific objectives to be achieved in this study will be outlined; (3) the method of data collection, where the methodology to respond to the research problem will be selected; (4) the appropriate data collection technique to respond to each objective; and (5) the data coding, where the different categories defined for the study will be identified and the data codification will be clarified.

3.1. Conceptual Framework of Analysis and Research Questions

Following this study, the conceptual framework of analysis that supports this investigation was developed after the bibliographic collection of reference books and scientific articles related to storytelling and consumer engagement (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of analysis
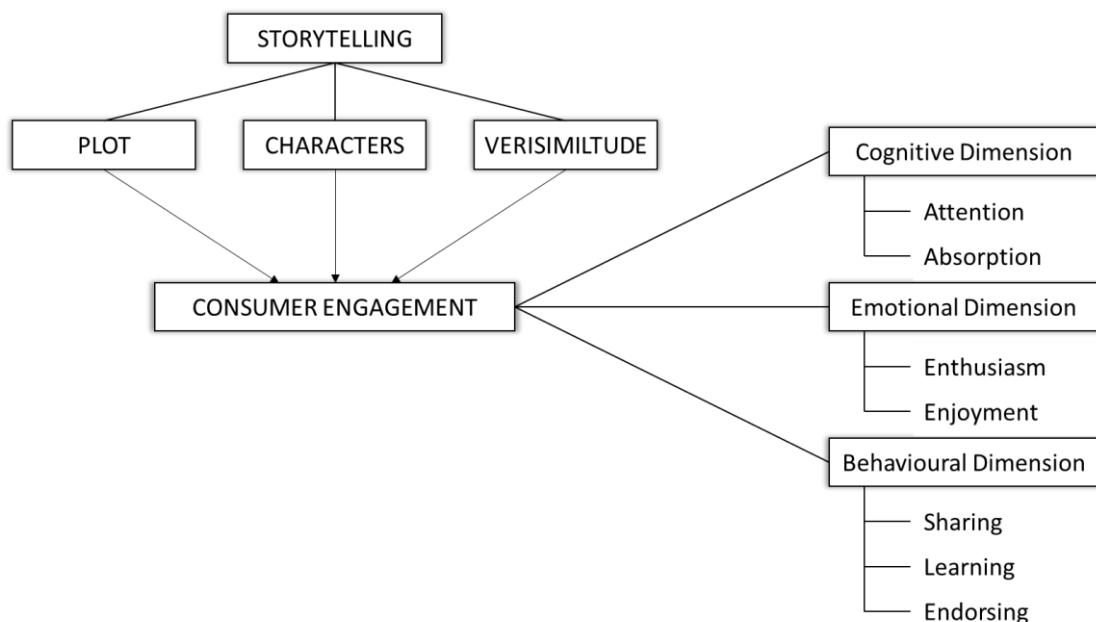
This model maps the variables taken from the literature review (theoretical framework) and from the research problem (empirical framework), which are the object of analysis of

this study to understand the relationships between them and the respective research questions.

Based on the previous literature review and the general objective of the research, this study then proposes the following research questions:

(RQ1) How does the plot of a story influence consumer engagement?

(RQ2) How do characters in a story influence consumer engagement?

(RQ3) How does the verisimilitude of a story influence consumer engagement?

(RQ4) How does the message of a story influence consumer engagement?

(RQ5) How does the music of a story influence consumer engagement?

3.2. Research Objectives

This research aims to discover the impact of digital storytelling on consumer engagement.

3.2.1. General Objective

The general objective of this investigation is, therefore, to understand the impact of digital storytelling components on the different consumer engagement dimensions.

3.2.2. Specific Objectives

In order to achieve the general objective, it is crucial to respond to the specific objectives:

(1) Identify the most relevant components of storytelling.

(2) Identify the different dimensions of consumer engagement.

(3) Understand how the plot of a story influences consumer engagement.

(4) Understand how characters in a story influence consumer engagement.

(5) Understand how the verisimilitude of a story influences consumer engagement.

(6) Understand how the message of a story influences consumer engagement.

(7) Understand how the music of a story influences consumer engagement.

3.3. Data Collection Method

Carmo and Ferreira (2008) define methods as (1) an adjusted set of procedures that are performed with the objective of achieving one or more objectives; (2) a group of principles that guide an organized investigation; (3) a set of rules that make it possible to choose and coordinate the techniques used in an investigation (Carmo & Ferreira, 2008).

Qualitative methodologies are capable of presenting more flexible results by collecting more in-depth information on a given topic from a restricted group of people (Prosek & Gibson, 2021). In addition, qualitative research also allows a better understanding of processes and relationships considered complex (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017).

In this way, and considering not only the flexibility required in this study but also the complexity of data to be collected (and the relationships to be understood), it was recognized that a qualitative methodology was the most adequate for the study.

In order to achieve the research objectives, a content analysis of the different participants' opinions of the focus groups was carried out, which were later transcribed and then analysed using the webQDA software. Content analysis is a methodological technique applied to different discourses and all forms of communication (Mayring, 2004), so it was used to analyse the participants' opinions.

A study based on content analysis must involve three essential steps: (1) the pre-analysis, where a fluctuating reading of the material is carried out, and its preparation and organisation; (2) the material's exploration, where the categories are listed with the respective guiding concepts and the coding is accomplished; (3) the results' treatment, where we study the inferences and the interpretation of the results (de Sousa & dos Santos, 2020).

3.4. Data Collection Technique

After defining the research objectives and methodology, it is essential to define the techniques used for data collection. Carmo and Ferreira (2008) argue that techniques are rigorous, well-defined, transferable functional procedures, susceptible to being re-applied under the same conditions, and adapted to the type of problem and the phenomena in question.

In order to respond to the previously defined objectives, the focus group was selected to be used as a technique for the collection of primary data on the relationship between

storytelling and consumer engagement and the literature review for the collection of secondary data about the most relevant components of storytelling and the different dimensions of consumer engagement.

A *Focus Group* is a discussion group that explores a specific set of questions asked by a moderator in order to extract collective views on a specific topic (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). The group considers itself focused since it involves some kind of collective activity, whether that activity is viewing a video or simply debating a set of issues (Barbour, 2018). This method differs from the others by the type of data collected and the explicit use of group interaction to generate this data (Sim & Waterfield, 2019).

Focus groups are a robust qualitative method used in market-oriented research to examine the meanings of participants' experiences and understand diversity in society (Ryan et al., 2014).

Using this method is particularly useful for (1) understanding how people view needs and goods in their lives and communities; (2) understanding how people think or feel about a problem, idea, behaviour, product, or service; and (3) share and compare experiences among participants (Krueger, 2014).

3.4.1. *Focus Group* Planning

3.4.1.1. The Script

One of the most crucial procedures in a *focus group* is creating and planning a script. The script for this focus group follows the suggestions made by Krueger (2014) not only in terms of its structure but also in terms of the typology of the questions asked:

- Make a short and smooth introduction to welcome the participants, give an overview of the topic, and provide any ground rules for the discussion;

- Use different types of questions:

    - Opening questions, which all participants answer;

    - Introductory questions, which initiate the discussion topic;

    - Transition questions, which lead the discussion to the key questions of the study;

- Key questions, which address the fundamental issues of the study, being, therefore, the most important ones;

- Ending questions, which close the discussion and allow participants to obtain their final point of view on the main topics, and which may include:

  - Summary questions, in which the moderator briefly summarizes the main ideas of the discussion and asks the participants about their agreement with the summary made;

  - Final question, which is usually standardized and placed after a study summary;

- Use open-ended questions, which give participants as much freedom as possible in their responses;

- Avoid questions whose answer can be yes or no, as one-word answers usually do not have the desired detail;

- Use questions that make people think about a past experience and not about the future;

- Use questions that involve participants in the discussion;

- Logically sequence the questions from the most general to the most specific;

- Be cautious with casual questions;

- Make a conclusion to thank the participants for their collaboration.

In addition, and following the suggestion of Barbour (2018), the script also includes the demonstration of three different advertisements used in order to stimulate the participants.

The script (see Appendix 1) for the focus group carried out in this study consists of six parts, and Table 1 explains the main goals of each part as well as the principal authors on which they were based.

Table 1: Description of the script

Blocks	Goals	Main Authors
I. Introduction	- Introduction of participants to get to know each other; - Give an overview of the topic under study; - Explain the rules;	Krueger (2014)
II. Introductory Questions	- Start the discussion topic in a way that makes participants more comfortable with the topic;	Krueger (2014)
III. Transition Questions	- Bring the discussion closer to the main topic of discussion;	Krueger (2014)
IV. Key Questions	- Respond to the specific objectives of the study that are the main topic of discussion;	Krueger (2014) Dessart and Pitardi (2019) Hollebeek et al. (2014)
V. Ending Questions	- Allow participants to add something they think is relevant to the study that has not been asked before;	Krueger (2014)
VI. Conclusion	- Thank participants for their time and input;	Krueger (2014)

The ad selection process started with extensive research into the best storytelling ads. More than twenty ads were viewed and analysed to select the ads with the most potential to be part of the study. In the first phase, those that did not incorporate at least three of the storytelling components presented in the literature review (plot, characters, verisimilitude, message and music) were excluded. Subsequently, the four ads were defined, considering the number of views, the number of comments and the number of likes of the videos on the YouTube platform.

Consequently, a table was created (Table 2) with the most relevant information regard-

ing the four advertisements selected for the study. The table contains the following information: (1) title of the ad and its link, (2) brand, (3) brief description of the ad, (4) number of views, (5) number of comments, (6) number of likes.

Table 2: Description of the selected videos

Ad Title and Link	Brand	Ad's Brief Description	Number of views	Number of comments	Number of likes
Christmas Commercial | Homecoming https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6-0kYhqoRo	EDEKA	It shows the tragic story of a grandfather faking his own death to get his family together at Christmas time, after multiple cancellations by his family for family gatherings.	68 811 880	17 537	370 000
Real Beauty Sketches | You're more beautiful than you think https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpaOjMXyJGk	DOVE	It shows a dynamic in which several people describe themselves to an artist and are described by others to the same artist to show that people always see themselves more negatively than others.	70 066 423	9 988	183 000
The Story of Sarah & Juan https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NemtQx0m0Ss&list=PLki8ZfczdXxgbvgRheFiAyqczSvs-QAqEW&index=4	EXTRA GUM	It shows the love story of Sara and Juan. Through high school, picnics, prom, fights and long-distance, one thing remains constant between Juan and Sarah – the Extra Gum.	620 230	561	Disabled by owner
Goat 4 Sale https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoM6IhfY8No&list=PLki8ZfczdXxgbvgRheFiAyqczSvs-QAqEW&index=4	DORITOS	It shows the comedy story of a man who buys a goat that is as obsessed with Doritos as he is but ends up wanting to sell it again because he feels the goat threatens his snack.	655 916	161	30 000

3.4.1.2. Participants

The realization of the *focus group* required initially inviting individuals of interest to the study to participate: people who have the characteristics, experience, or knowledge necessary to contribute with valuable information on the subject in question (Krueger, 2014).

The universe on which this investigation will focus is characterized by male or female individuals residing in the north of Portugal and belonging to generation Z, representing individuals born between 1995 and 2009 (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2009). Consequently, the convenience sampling process is applied, which is the most common non-probability sampling method, since the sample is selected according to the researcher's convenience and is easily accessible (Garg, 2016).

Six individuals were selected for each of the four *focus groups* conducted, as suggested by Krueger (2014). We chose to invite one more participant per group than necessary to replace participants who might be absent without prior notice, as stated by Barbour (2018). In addition, power differentials among participants in the same *focus group* were also avoided so that everyone felt comfortable talking to each other (Krueger, 2014).

In order to ensure participants' confidentiality, their names were coded using the letter G to identify which *focus group* they belonged to, followed by the letter P and the order number in which they were seated (G1P1 to G1P6; G2P1 to G2P6; G3P1 to G3P6; G4P1 to G4P6).

3.4.1.3. Ethical Issues

As in any investigation, this focus group considered the fulfilment of ethical issues inherent to scientific studies. Participants consented to the audio and video recording of the discussion (see Appendix 2) (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). They were also informed that the confidentiality of the discussion could not be ensured, in an absolute way, since several members participating in this method may consequently make comments outside the focus group, as stated by Sim & Waterfield (2019).

3.4.2. *Focus Group* Implementation

According to Krueger (2014), one of the first aspects to consider when conducting a *focus group* is the venue where it should take place. It was decided to hold the *focus group* in the

living room of a house, a place of easy accessibility for participants, calm, comfortable, and away from interruptions or observation by outsiders and non-participants (Barbour, 2018; Krueger, 2014)

Although this may inhibit participants' behaviour, audio and video recordings were made with two mobile devices of sufficient quality to record group interactions, supplemented by the moderator's notes during the discussion, with particular attention to aspects of participant body language (Barbour, 2018).

The first *focus group* took place on June 13 at 10:10 pm, with 6 participants – 4 females and 2 males – coded as G1P1, G1P2, G1P3, G1P4, G1P5, and G1P6. The session lasted 1 hour and 35 minutes. The second *focus group* took place on June 16 at 10:10 pm, with 6 participants – 4 females and 2 males – coded as G2P1, G2P2, G2P3, G2P4, G2P5, and G2P6. The session lasted 1 hour and 45 minutes. The third *focus group* took place on June 18 at 10:40 pm, with 6 participants – 3 female and 3 male – coded as G3P1, G3P2, G3P3, G3P4, G3P5, and G3P6. The session lasted 1 hour and 50 minutes. The fourth *focus group* took place on June 22 at 10:10 pm, with 6 participants – 3 female and 3 male – coded as G4P1, G4P2, G4P3, G4P4, G4P5, and G4P6. The session lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes. The average duration of the *focus groups* was 1 hour and 40 minutes, which is in line with what was suggested by Krueger (2014).

3.5. Data Coding

The next step begins with the transcription of the focus groups, which, according to Bloor (2001), prevents the loss of important information and prevents the analysis from being selective and superficial. The transcription process is very complex due to the high number of people involved. However, as much of the recorded speech as possible was transcribed (Bloor, 2001). In addition to being transcribed, focus groups were also translated into English, taking into account that they were carried out in Portuguese. The transcripts totalled 62 pages which then constitute the corpus of analysis.

Once finalised, the transcripts were subject to a thorough reading in order to have a global view of the data and to understand the content and its parties in more detail.

As mentioned above, recording and transcribing focus groups is very advantageous for the analysis. Nonetheless, it is even more advantageous if these data are analysed using qualitative data analysis software, such as webQDA, NVivo, or Atlas.ti (Breen, 2006; Souza

et al., 2011). This type of software allows not only to decrease the subjectivity of the researchers involved in the study but also to elaborate the results and the data analysis with more depth (Chaves et al., 2015).

This way, the transcripts were inserted into the WebQDA software with a common and anonymous format. The text was coded based on the categories that emerged from the literature review and the analysis objectives. Consequently, 12 subcategories were grouped into 4 categories, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Categories hierarchy

1. Storytelling Components	2. Cognitive Dimension	3. Emotional Dimension	4. Behavioural Dimension
1.1. Plot	2.1. Attention	3.1. Enjoyment	4.1. Endorsing
1.2. Characters	2.2. Absorption	3.2. Enthusiasm	4.2. Learning
1.3. Verisimilitude			4.3. Sharing
1.4. Message			
1.5. Music			
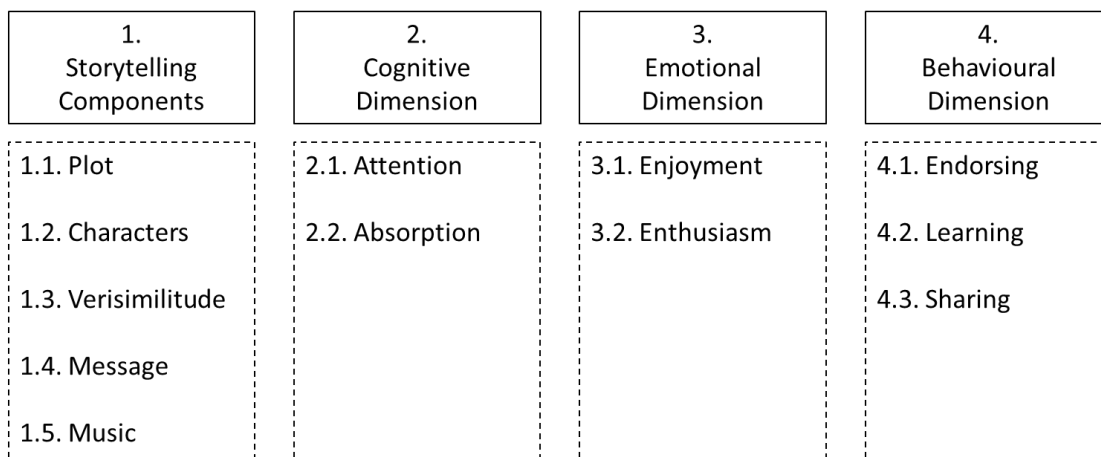
4. Findings And Discussion

After defining and justifying the methodology of this dissertation, this chapter aims to present, analyse and discuss the results obtained in the field. The evidence provides the rationale for the work's contribution to the current state of knowledge of the subject under study. This chapter is divided into four sections: (1) the ten most frequent concepts; (2) the participants' perception of storytelling in the communication context; (3) the relevance of storytelling components; and (4) the impact of storytelling components on consumer engagement, which will respond to the specific objectives of the research in question.

4.1. The 10 Most Frequent Concepts

For qualitative data analysis, a series of methods and techniques were used so that some quantifiable data could appear, helping to interpret the results more objectively. For this, the frequency of concepts of the coded focus groups was analysed, and some interesting results emerged. Some procedures had to be performed in order to execute the most frequent concepts' cloud (Figure 3) as accurately as possible. Regarding the concepts that mirror the storytelling components – "message", "plot", "verisimilitude", "characters", and "music" - all parts of the analysis corpus that could refer to any of these components were coded and counted as such. Regarding the remaining concepts – "advertisement", "people", "story", "brand", and "product" - several similar words that did not change the meaning of the concept were counted. For the "advertisement" concept, the words "advertisement", "advertisements", "ad", "ads", "video" and "videos" were considered. For the "people" concept, the words "person", "people", "personal" and "personally" were considered. For the "story" concept, the words "story" and "stories" were considered. For the "brand" concept, the words "brand" and "brands" were considered. For the "product" concept, the words "product" and "products" were considered.

Figure 3: Cloud of concepts - The 10 most frequent concepts

Some associations could be made when analysing the frequency of concepts (Figure 3). In addition to the five storytelling components analysed in this study, other concepts such as "Story", "Ad", and "People" were also included in this cloud.

"Ad" and "Story" are, respectively, the first and fifth most frequent concepts since storytelling ads are currently at the centre of marketing (Pulizzi, 2012). Moreover, the results of engagement between the customer and the brand through ads with narrative persuasion are evidently different from the results of traditional advertising (van Laer et al., 2019).

"People" is the fourth most frequent concept, suggesting that when we think of engagement, we immediately think of people, thus, interaction and relationships. Consumer engagement has been seen as a behavioural aspect that stimulates interactions (Khan, 2017) and relationships building with consumers (Claffey & Brady, 2019).

4.2. Participants' Perception About Storytelling

4.2.1. What is a story for you?

For most participants, a story is a sequence of events (plot), fictional or real, with a beginning, middle and end, as mentioned by the authors (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019). It must

also contain a theme or message and characters, which is in line with what is cited by Faustino (2018), who mentions that characters and strong messages must be created in the development of a story. Participants also mentioned that a story, when told by others, can provoke or lead to a mental image. This idea is in line with the phenomenon of narrative transportation, mentioned by Houghton (2021), who explains that when faced with stories, consumers end up mentally producing experiences that are, in fact, vivid mental imagery identical to those in the real world.

> "A story can be both fiction and reality. However, it is still a sequence of events, fictional or real." - **G4P3**
>
> "I think a story has to have the character, it has to have a message, a theme, and it has to have a beginning, middle and an end." - **G1P5**
>
> "(…) deep down, you will always imagine the story they are telling you in your head" - **G1P4**

4.2.2. Where in your daily life do you come across stories? And who tells them?

For most participants, stories are primarily present in gatherings (with family and friends) since stories are the most common communication format among humans (Carrilho & Markus, 2014; Dessart & Pitardi, 2019). In addition, stories are also present on social networks and in movies and series, which can be understood by the fact that today's consumers seek access to more social and visual content instead of text content (Faustino, 2018).

4.2.3. Do you usually hear stories in the context of communication? If so, in which media and formats?

All focus group participants usually hear stories in the context of communication. For most participants, the most used medium is through social networks, and the most frequent format is advertisements, which is in line with what is mentioned by Faustino (2018).

4.2.4. What do you think about the use of stories by brands when communicating with their audiences?

Most participants think that using stories by brands when communicating with their

audiences makes communication more captivating, effective and also more authentic and credible, which is also alluded to by Coker et al. (2021).

> "I find it captivating." - **G1P2**
>
> "I think it is more effective and more credible." - **G1P1**
>
> "(…) I think it makes it more real" - **G1P4**

In addition, they mention that it is an excellent way to attract more attention, which is precisely one of the barriers that storytelling overcomes mentioned by Coker et al. (2021). Apart from that, stories make communication more memorable, contributing to a brand, product or service being able to achieve a greater connection with the viewer, as defended by Herskovitz and Crystal (2010).

> "(…) it is a good way to get people's attention." - **G3P2**
>
> "(…) this creates a bond that is infinitely greater than, for example, ads that only talk about promotions and so on." - **G2P6**

Finally, they also mention that using stories in the context of communication facilitates the passing of a message to the viewer, which is seen as the main objective of storytelling (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019). Besides, it also has the ability to enhance brand awareness, one of the main incentives for the use of storytelling that Faustino (2018) identifies.

> "(…) when there is a story, it is easier to convey a message (…) advertising stays more in the head" - **G2P4**
>
> "(…) it greatly improves brand awareness for me" - **G1P6**

However, participants refer to some cautions and disadvantages regarding this type of communication. Firstly, they mention that brands should pay attention to ethical issues when using stories to communicate. In addition, they mention that it is not easy to build a story that pleases all viewers and that it takes much expertise to achieve it, which is why Lambert (2010) says that it is essential to understand the story's target audience. Finally, they also allude that seeing the same stories several times can become tiring and boring.

> "(…) it takes much of expertise to know how to do this in an appealing way"
> - **G3P2**

4.3. The Relevance Of Storytelling Components

In order to understand whether the five storytelling components selected for analysis in this study were indeed relevant, participants were asked, at the end of each focus group, to rank the five components in order of importance.

After collecting all the responses, it was possible to see that the message is the most relevant component for participants since stories are told, heard and responded with the primary objective of transmitting and absorbing messages or ideas (Kuan et al., 2012).

> "(…) first the message, because I think it is through the message that I then fix the ads" -
> **G2P4**
>
> "(…) the message in the first place, because I think that is what gets you stuck and in your memory in most ads" - **G3P2**

The plot is the second most relevant component for participants, which is in line with what is mentioned by Kent (2015) when he states that the plot in a story is the equivalent of a premise in an argument: it is what defines the kind of story that will be told.

> "(…) I think the message for me is the most important thing is what stays in your mind, but the plot helps to tell that message." - **G4P3**
>
> "(…) is the plot that will show you and lead to the message. In other words, it is important to convey a good message, but if this message is not conveyed correctly, regardless good it may be, it may not reach the intended results and may not be interpreted in the most positive way"
> - **G3P6**

The third most relevant component for the participants, thus filling the places on the podium, is verisimilitude, which can be understood by the fact that the degree of verisimilitude affects the listener's perception of bringing stories closer to real-life experiences (Green, 2004).

> "(…) the verisimilitude in third, because I think it makes the plot much more captivating" - **G3P3**

> "(…) Then the verisimilitude, because I think it is important for us to feel that we can be in the role of that person, to associate ourselves with what they are feeling and to be able to receive the message as well" - **G2P5**

The fourth most relevant component for participants is music since, according to Huron (1989), choosing good music can contribute to the effectiveness of an ad by making it more attractive and less intrusive and can also contribute to more significant memorization.

> "(…) then also the music (…) because I think it is important in terms of keeping us involved in the video." - **G2P1**

> "(…) Then the music (…) because it is what you are listening to, it is what you are recording, that music is what will unconsciously mark you" - **G3P4**

Characters were the fifth and last component selected by participants. They are the element that allows the story's audience to experience beliefs, purposes and emotions and facilitate the approximation of the stories to real-life experiences (Pera & Viglia, 2016).

> "(…) the characters (…) I think they are important because there are stories that have an impact if they are told with certain people and that if told with others, they already have another impact." - **G3P4**

> "The characters (…) the way you are going to personify the message and what they want to convey, I think it is important, if I see a character X it will make me feel something different from the character Y" - **G4P6**

Although this ranking was carried out, many participants expressed their difficulty in constructing this ordering. They mentioned that for them, all these components are relevant when talking about storytelling in the context of communication.

> "In other words, I think all the elements are important." - **G4P3**

4.4. Impact Of Storytelling Components On Consumer Engagement

After concluding the coding of the analysis corpus and in order to respond to the study's specific objectives, a matrix was created (Table 2). The five components of story-

telling - the plot, the characters, the verisimilitude, the message and the music, addressed by Pera and Viglia (2016), Fog et al. (2005) and Lambert (2010) - were crossed with the three dimensions of consumer engagement - the cognitive dimension, the emotional dimension and the behavioural dimension addressed by Hollebeek et al. (2014) and Dessart and Pitardi (2019). This matrix aims to mirror the impact of storytelling components on consumer engagement.

Table 3: Impact of storytelling components on consumer engagement

		Cognitive Dimension		Emotional Dimension		Behavioural Dimension			Total
		Attention	Absorption	Enthusiasm	Enjoyment	Sharing	Learning	Endorsing	
Storytelling Components	Plot	17	25	16	10	4	5	4	81
		42		26		13			
	Characters	3	2	4	7	0	1	4	21
		5		11		5			
	Verisimilitude	9	3	6	4	18	25	13	78
		12		10		56			
	Message	12	4	7	4	21	29	18	95
		16		11		68			
	Music	1	0	4	1	0	0	0	6
		1		5		0			
Total		76		63		142			

4.4.1. Understand how the plot of a story influences consumer engagement

Table 4: Impact of plot of a story on consumer engagement

		Cognitive Dimension		Emotional Dimension		Behavioural Dimension		
		Attention	Absorption	Enthusiasm	Enjoyment	Sharing	Learning	Endorsing
Storytelling Components	Plot	17	25	16	10	4	5	4
	Total	42		26		13		

As shown in the table above, the plot significantly impacts consumer engagement's cognitive and emotional dimensions. It is, in fact, the component with the most significant impact on the cognitive dimension, both in terms of attention and absorption (see Table 3). In other words, when participants explain why a particular ad calls them more attention

and provokes more concentration (absorption), they mainly refer to the plot, as we can see in some of these comments.

> "(…) what caught my attention the most was the Doritos because I was glued from start to finish, at least to see how it would end." - **G4P6**
>
> "(…) the first one left me attentive and trying to see how the story would end, and even that suspense when a person dies and not knowing what is going to happen, I think there, in the plot part, it made us more attached to the screen" - **G2P6**

> "(…) what made me more focused was the first one, because I think we could not miss any moment of that story" - **G2P4**
>
> "(…) I think the third one was the one that kept me more concentrating to understand the end of the ad" - **G3P6**

It is also the component with the most significant impact on the emotional dimension, both in terms of enthusiasm and enjoyment (see Table 3). When participants explain why a particular ad causes them greater enthusiasm (interest) and enjoyment (happiness), they also primarily refer to the plot, as we can see in some of these comments.

> "(…) I was always trying to figure out what would happen next. That is what I was most interested in throughout the ad, and it is the one with the best plot" - **G2P6**
>
> "For me, it was the Extra Gum one, without a doubt. (…) because I did not know what was going to happen, it excited me because of it, because it focused me." - **G4P4**

> "The third one, for me, is also very happy, the end is amazing." - **G4P6**
>
> "For me it was the Extra Gum one, not in the sense of laughing, but in the sense of being happy, a bit like I said earlier of wanting to be proposed in that way, wanting to be there, wanting to live that experience. It has undoubtedly brought me great happiness." - **G4P3**

On the contrary, it has a reduced impact on the behavioural dimension of consumer engagement.

In this way, it is possible to conclude that the plot is powerfully relevant to create cognitive and emotional engagement and less relevant to create behavioural engagement. These results regarding the impact of the plot on consumer engagement are in line with the ideas defended by Dessart and Pitardi (2019). These authors argue that the story's plot generates more consumer engagement in the cognitive base due to the continuous attention and absorption with the object of engagement. The high emotional engagement in the plot is mainly encouraged by the story's climax, which triggers various emotions in consumers regarding the story's content. Stern (1994) also says that consumers' positive feelings and emotions stimulate empathy with the plot (Stern, 1994). Although the plot has a reduced impact on the behavioural dimension of consumer engagement, this impact can be explained by the desire to learn, support and share the content transmitted by the story (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019).

4.4.2. Understand how characters in a story influence consumer engagement

Table 5: Impact of characters of a story on consumer engagement

		Cognitive Dimension		Emotional Dimension		Behavioural Dimension		
		Attention	Absorption	Enthusiasm	Enjoyment	Sharing	Learning	Endorsing
Storytelling Component	Characters	3	2	4	7	0	1	4
	Total	5		11		5		

As exhibited in the table above, characters have a moderate impact on the emotional dimension of consumer engagement. Although the impact on enthusiasm is small, the impact on enjoyment is relatively high compared to the other components (see Table 3). When participants explain why a particular ad causes them more enjoyment (happiness), they sometimes refer to the characters, as we can see in some of these comments.

> "For me, the one that brought me the most happiness was the first one, because of the audacity of the grandfather" - **G1P4**
>
> "I think the most amusing is the last one (…) they put a goat in a potato ad."
> - **G4P5**

In consumer engagement's cognitive and behavioural dimensions, characters have a shallow impact.

In this way, it is possible to conclude that characters are moderately relevant to create emotional engagement and less relevant to create cognitive and behavioural engagement. These results regarding the impact of characters on consumer engagement are in line with the ideas defended by Pera and Vigilia (2016). These authors argue that the emotional dimension of consumer engagement is, in fact, where the characters have the most significant impact, as they are the component that allows the audience of the story to experience beliefs, purposes and emotions and play a fundamental role in creating empathy between consumers and the story, as they facilitate the approximation of stories to real-life experiences (Pera & Viglia, 2016). Although the characters have a minimal impact on the cognitive dimension of consumer engagement, this impact can be explained by the fact that the characters' behaviour and mentality are essential elements of cognition and understanding of the story's plot (Nicoli et al., 2021). The characters have a shallow impact on the behavioural dimension of consumer engagement; however, as small as this impact is, it exists, which is not in line with what Dessart and Pitardi (2019) defend when they say that the characters have no impact on this dimension.

4.4.3. Understand how the verisimilitude of a story influences consumer engagement

Table 6: Impact of verisimilitude of a story on consumer engagement

		Cognitive Dimension		Emotional Dimension		Behavioural Dimension		
		Attention	Absorption	Enthusiasm	Enjoyment	Sharing	Learning	Endorsing
Storytelling Component	Verisimilitude	9	3	6	4	18	25	13
	Total	12		10		56		

As shown in the table above, verisimilitude moderately impacts consumer engagement's cognitive and emotional dimensions. Although the impact at the absorption level is small, the impact at the attention level is relatively high compared to the other components (see Table 3). Moreover, although the impact on the level of enjoyment is small, the impact on the level of enthusiasm is relatively high compared to the other components (see Table 3). In other words, when participants explain why a particular ad causes them more attention and enthusiasm, they moderately refer to verisimilitude, as we can see in some of these comments.

> "In the Dove ad, the more realistic character and being an essential and current subject also makes us see, and I think that is another important factor for attention." - **G2P6**
>
> "(…) For me, it was the first one that caught my attention, as real as it is in my life, it really impressed me." - **G3P1**

> "The level of enthusiasm for me was also the Dove ad because it is very much my reality." - **G3P6**
>
> "(…) as you are seeing that, you start to think that it really exists, and that excites" - **G3P3**

Concerning the behavioural dimension of consumer engagement, verisimilitude has a very high impact. It is, in fact, the second component with the most significant impact on the behavioural dimension, both in terms of sharing, learning and endorsing (see Table 3). When participants explain why a particular ad encourages them to share, learn and endorse (support), they mainly refer to verisimilitude, as seen in some of these comments.

> "I shared the first one, in fact, I had already shared it with people, because I think it is an important subject and I think it is important for other people to have the perception that this happens, nowadays." - **G2P4**
>
> "(…) it is something that is present in practically all of society and therefore makes you want to share" - **G3P5**

> "(…) I think it is the second one from Dove that has a greater amount of learning because it really shows us something that we are not aware even exists" - **G1P2**
>
> "(…) in my case, it contributed to my learning, because it is something I deal with daily" - **G4P2**

> "I support the first ad (…) it is me wanting to protect the character and the people who go through this in real life, it is me wanting to support these people." - **G4P4**
>
> "I support the first ad too (…) sometimes we think that this reality does not exist much, but it exists a lot, and making people aware of this I think is fundamental." - **G4P1**

In this way, it is possible to conclude that verisimilitude is powerfully relevant to create behavioural engagement and moderately relevant to create cognitive and emotional engagement.

These results regarding the verisimilitude impact on consumer engagement are partially in line with the ideas defended by Pera and Vigilia (2016) and Van Laer et al. (2014). These authors argue that the behavioural dimension of consumer engagement is, in fact, where verisimilitude has the most significant impact since the closer the story is to reality, the more people are willing to act, whether out of a desire to share or support the content of the story (Pera & Viglia, 2016). The positive impact of verisimilitude on the cognitive dimension of consumer engagement can be explained by the fact that stories similar to real-life trigger reflections and considerations through the transmission of valuable messages (van Laer et al., 2014). Verisimilitude has a moderate impact on the emotional dimension of consumer engagement, which is not in line with what Dessart and Pitardi (2019) defend. For these authors, verisimilitude has no impact at all on this dimension.

4.4.4. Understand how the message of a story influences consumer engagement

Table 7: Impact of message of a story on consumer engagement

		Cognitive Dimension		Emotional Dimension		Behavioural Dimension		
		Attention	Absorption	Enthusiasm	Enjoyment	Sharing	Learning	Endorsing
Storytelling Component	Message	12	4	7	4	21	29	18
	Total	16		11		68		

As shown in the table above, the message has a moderate impact on the emotional dimension of consumer engagement. Although the impact on enjoyment is small, the impact on enthusiasm is relatively high compared to the other components (see Table 3). In other

words, when participants explain why a particular ad causes them more enthusiasm, they moderately refer to the message, as seen in some of these comments.

> "(…) it excited me because it left me with the message in my head" - **G1P1**
>
> "What excited me the most was the Dove ad because it is an ad that makes you think, the way you look at yourself is not the way others look." - **G3P4**

The message has a high impact on the cognitive dimension of consumer engagement. Although the impact on absorption is small, the impact on attention is remarkably high compared to the other components (see Table 3). In other words, when participants explain why a particular ad attracts more attention, they highly refer to the message, as seen in some of these comments.

> "The one from Dove caught my attention in the message it conveys" - **G1P1**
>
> "(…) the ones that caught my attention the most were the first and the second, because of the message they convey and for somehow identifying myself with the message." - **G2P4**

The message has a very high impact on the behavioural dimension of consumer engagement. It is, in fact, the component with the most significant impact on the behavioural dimension, both in terms of sharing, learning and endorsing (see Table 3). When participants explain why a particular ad encourages them to share, learn and endorse, they mainly refer to the message, as seen in some of these comments.

> "(…) I shared the second one, that of Dove. Because I think it's the one that has the most beautiful and most shareable message." - **G2P5**
>
> "(…) I shared the first one (…) I think the message was the one that would have the most impact on the lives of the people I sent it to" - **G2P1**

> "(…) For me, it was Dove's too. First, because I think it is a message that our society really needs to learn. And I think it is a message that is very impactful, that it is needed." - **G4P2**
>
> "(…) the second one too, because I learned to think differently about it" - **G1P6**

> "I support the Dove ad because I support the cause they shared. It has a brutal message and is very well accomplished." - **G2P2**
>
> "(…) I supported the first one without a doubt. Excellent message to convey." - **G4P6**

In this way, it is possible to conclude that the message is powerfully relevant to create behavioural and cognitive engagement and moderately relevant to create emotional engagement. These results regarding the impact of the message on consumer engagement are in line with the ideas defended by Dessart and Pitardi (2019). These authors argue that consumers show a strong sign of individual commitment to the story's message by showing a willingness to learn, share and consequently support the message of the story, thus reflecting the substantial impact it has on the behavioural dimension of consumer engagement. Regarding the impact of the message on the cognitive dimension of consumer engagement, the authors explain that consumers show a particular cognitive process as soon as they get involved in the story when they reflect on the story's message and what it means to them. The emotional engagement of consumers in the story, albeit moderate, is explained by the fact that consumers feel somehow touched by the message and its meaning (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019).

4.4.5. Understand how the music of a story influences consumer engagement

Table 8: Impact of music of a story on consumer engagement

		Cognitive Dimension		Emotional Dimension		Behavioural Dimension		
		Attention	Absorption	Enthusiasm	Enjoyment	Sharing	Learning	Endorsing
Storytelling Component	Music	1	0	4	1	0	0	0
	Total	1		5		0		

As shown in the table above, music has a reduced impact on the emotional dimension of consumer engagement. Although the impact on enthusiasm is not that small, it is the component with the most insignificant impact on the emotional dimension in terms of enjoyment (see Table 3). In other words, when participants explain why a particular ad provokes them more enthusiasm, they refer to music, albeit in a reduced way, as seen in some of these comments.

> "For me, it was the one from Extra Gum, the music got me really excited to sing" - **G4P2**
>
> "What excited me the most was the one from Extra Gum, without a doubt. Mainly because of the music" - **G4P4**

Music has a minimal impact on the cognitive dimension of consumer engagement. It is, in fact, the component with the most insignificant impact on the cognitive dimension, both in terms of attention and absorption (see Table 3). However, when participants explain why a particular ad attracts them more attention, they refer to music in a very minimal way.

Music has no impact at all on the behavioural dimension of consumer engagement. When participants explain why a particular ad encourages them to share, learn and endorse, they do not mention music at all.

In this way, it is possible to conclude that music is rarely relevant to create cognitive and emotional engagement and not at all relevant to create behavioural engagement. Despite this, and contrary to what Huron (1989) says, who argues that music can help to engage or captivate viewers, in this study, music does not relevantly impact consumer engagement. However, under an exhaustive search of these topics, there is not enough literature to support the evidence found.

5. Conclusions

The main objective of this dissertation was to investigate the impact of digital storytelling, more precisely its components, on consumer engagement. Therefore, this chapter presents the final conclusions on the topic and includes the study's contributions to management and limitations and suggestions for future research.

After carrying out the literature review, which had storytelling and consumer engagement as key themes, it was possible to conclude that the most relevant components of storytelling are: the plot, the characters, the verisimilitude, the message and the music. Regarding consumer engagement, it was also possible to perceive that it is divided into three main dimensions: the cognitive dimension, which involves attention and absorption; the emotional dimension, which involves the enthusiasm and enjoyment felt; and the behavioural dimension, which involves sharing, learning and sponsorship. However, it was not possible to perceive, through the literature review, how the most relevant components of storytelling were related to the dimensions of engagement.

Thus, in order to respond to the remaining specific objectives, a collection of primary data was carried out through the realisation of four focus groups with participants of generation Z. After gathering the participants' data, they were analysed using the WebQDA qualitative analysis support software.

With the support of focus group outcomes, it was feasible to conclude that the message is the most relevant component of a story. This may be because, for the majority of people, a story without a message is meaningless and not at all memorable. For many people, messages are implied in stories as if they were intrinsic to a story. Along with the message comes the plot, which turns out to be also quite relevant since it represents the way in which that message will be transmitted. It is also important to note that various participants mentioned the music as a significant component, even though it did not stand out as much in terms of relevance. Others, on the other hand, had utterly distinct ideas, demonstrating considerable discrepancy of opinions. Music's various roles in people's lives can serve as evidence for this. While some people genuinely enjoy music, others do not care as much, and this is also reflected in the role of music in stories.

The study results reveal that the dimension where the plot has the most impact is the

cognitive one, due to the continuous attention and absorption with the object of engagement, as defended by the authors Dessart and Pitardi (2019). The dimension where the characters have a more significant impact is the emotional one, as the authors Pera and Vigilia (2016) mention, since they allow the audience to experience emotions and create empathy with the story, as they facilitate the approximation of the stories to real-life experiences. The dimension where verisimilitude has the most impact is the behavioural one, which is in line with what the authors Pera and Vigilia (2016) indicate since the closer the story is to reality, the more people are willing to act, whether out of a desire to learn, share or support the content of the story. The dimension where the message has the most significant impact is the behavioural one, as seen from what is said by Dessart and Pitardi (2019) since consumers show a strong sign of individual commitment to the message of the story by showing a willingness to understand, share and consequently support the message of the story. The dimension where music has the most impact is the emotional one; however, this impact is considered insignificant, contrary to what Huron (1989) refers to, who argues that music helps to engage or captivate viewers' emotions.

It is nevertheless conceivable to get the conclusion that the plot has the most impact on the cognitive and emotional dimensions. Additionally, the message, which is also one of the two components that consumers esteem most, has the greatest impact on the behavioural dimension.

5.1. Theoretical And Practical Contributions Of The Study

Theoretically, this investigation contributes significantly to the literature regarding communication in a storytelling format since it shows not only the combination of the main components that a story must include - plot, message, verisimilitude, music and characters - but also evidences the most relevant components and the most valued by consumers. On the other hand, this study also contributes to the advancement of research regarding the relationship between storytelling components and consumer engagement. It focuses on the dimensions and sub-dimensions of engagement as consequences of stories. By directly linking story components with consumer responses, the study contributes to previous research, highlighting the contribution of each story component to specific dimensions of consumer engagement, particularly with regard to message and music, as it was added to the model presented by Dessart and Pitardi (2019) these two components, which had not

yet been related to consumer engagement. It is also interesting to highlight the characters and the verisimilitude since different perspectives were presented in this study compared to what existed in previous research (Dessart & Pitardi, 2019).

From a management point of view, the results showed how specific elements of the brand story, adequately orchestrated, can stimulate cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement. Thus, in terms of practical contributions, the results obtained in this study will allow any brand that intends to communicate through videos to understand better how to produce narrative content according to the intended objectives. Contrary to what happens in other studies, this research focuses on the dimensions and sub-dimensions of consumer engagement as a consequence of stories, allowing companies to obtain answers about the type of story that generates more engagement and which components are most valued by consumers. For example, a brand that wants to do this type of communication but has limited resources and consequently cannot focus on everything this format requires should focus more on the plot and the message. This is because these two components are not only the ones that most affect consumer engagement but also the ones that consumers value the most.

5.2. Limitations And Suggestions For Future Research

Regardless of the findings and conclusions, the present study faced some limitations throughout the process. Considering the study's exploratory nature and the sample size, which focuses only on the opinions of generation Z, the findings cannot be fully generalized. In the future, carrying out a similar study may be helpful but involving a more comprehensive and significant sample. This would provide the opportunity to develop more knowledge about the impact of storytelling components on consumer engagement.

Regarding the methods and techniques chosen to carry out the study, it was decided to use a qualitative methodology using focus groups. For future studies, it could be interesting to complement the study with other techniques, such as semi-structured interviews with experts on the subject. It could be interesting to use a mixed methodology operating a more quantitative analysis based, for example, on questionnaires, to verify the causal relationships between the story elements and the dimensions of engagement.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1 – *Focus Group* Script

Bloco	Questões

I. Introdução	- Boas vindas aos participantes
	- Apresentação do moderador
	- Apresentação do tema e objetivos do estudo
	- Explicação das regras:
	    • Sinceridade
	    • Não existem respostas certas ou erradas
	- Reforçar a confidencialidade por parte do moderador e de tudo o que for gravado
	- Informar da gravação em áudio e vídeo
	- Apresentação dos participantes

II. Questões Introdutórias	(1) O que é para vocês uma história? (2) Onde é que no vosso dia-a-dia se confrontam com histórias? E quem as conta?
III. Questões de Transição	(3) Costumam ouvir histórias em contexto de comunicação? Se sim, em que meios e formatos? (4) O que pensam sobre o uso de histórias pelas marcas na hora de comunicarem com os seus públicos?
IV. Questões-Chave	(5) De uma forma geral e sucinta, qual a vossa opinião sobre os anúncios exibidos? (6) Dos anúncios exibidos qual o que mais gostaram e que menos gostaram, e porquê? (7) Houve algum anúncio que vos chamou/ despertou a atenção? Se sim, qual e porquê? (8) Em qual dos anúncios exibidos estiveram mais concentrados, e porquê? (9) Qual foi o anúncio que vos entusiasmou (excitação e interesse) mais, e porquê? (10) Qual foi o anúncio com o qual se divertiram (prazer e felicidade) mais, e porquê? (11) Qual foi o anúncio que contribui mais para a vossa aprendizagem, e porquê?

IV. Questões-Chave	(12) Se tivessem a oportunidade de partilhar um destes anúncios com um amigo/familiar qual seria, e porquê? (13) Qual o anúncio que mais facilmente apoiariam ou rejeitariam, e porquê? (14) Pedia que ordenassem, na folha que foi vos foi entregue, e por ordem de importância as seguintes componentes do *storytelling*: Enredo; Personagens; Verossimilhança; Mensagem; Música.
V. Questões Finais	(15) Querem referir alguma coisa que não foi discutida? (16) Têm algum conselho para este estudo?
VI. Conclusão	- Agradecer a participação; - Reiterar a importância da participação; - Referir a possibilidade de verificarem os resultados na dissertação de mestrado.

Appendix 2 – Participants Consent

Consentimento dos/as participantes

Foi convidado(a) a participar num *Focus Group*, realizado no âmbito do Mestrado em Gestão, subordinado ao tema: "O impacto do *storytelling* digital no *consumer engagement*".

O *Focus Group* será gravado e filmado, mas será garantido o anonimato.

Neste *Focus Group* não existem respostas certas nem erradas. O objetivo é recolher diferentes pontos de vista, diferentes experiências e ouvir todos(as) os(as) participantes.

Gostaria de pedir:

- Sinceridade nas respostas, mesmo que estas sejam diferentes dos(as) restantes participantes, não existem respostas certas ou erradas;

- Que fale uma pessoa de cada vez;

- Que tudo o que se ouça nesta discussão se mantenha sigiloso.

Compreendo esta informação e concordo em participar nas condições acima referidas,

_____